

2010

Life Itself



INTRODUCTION (written June 2025)

I wasn't fully prepared to jump in a journal-*istic* time machine and revisit 2010 with the fervor I have this week. Viewed only through the lens of memory, the specific frustrations are long forgotten and in their place is a hazy narrative arc that privileges good times over bad. From the vantage point of 2025, I know how everything turned out, so all the fear and anxiety of the Present moment is drained away and what once felt like life-or-death decisions now seem to be "what was meant to be".

Through the prism of these various journals, however, 2010 takes on a different, vastly more specific hue. I relive all the frustrations I felt in real time. They tell a more complicated and contradictory story. I remembered 2010 as a bumpy ride, but *this* bumpy? Re-reading these tales of my days and nights, part of me is surprised I wrote so candidly, but I'm glad I did. I knew I'd never let anyone read these, so I let it all out. It does help me understand why many people destroy old diaries. They don't show us in the best light. They show our shadows. Those can be hard to look at, even a decade and a half later.

I was going through difficult changes in 2010 and many swings in motivation and intent are captured in the minutiae of these entries. Time and memory sand down the ruggedness of day-to-day life into a story that has a smoother narrative arc. These entries show that is *not* how life is experienced in the Present as we stumble into the uncertainty of what-is-to-come. In the Present, I was busy setting goals, falling short of my goals, changing my mind, changing it yet again, and sometimes throwing in the towel and saying, "I can't do this anymore."

Reading these pages, I feel humbled. The only context I'll give is this: on January 5, 2010, I walked into Jackson Square in New Orleans, finishing a 4-month, 1,600-mile walk from my hometown of West Hebron, NY. I should have felt triumphant – and *part* of me did. But as is often the case in the aftermath of attaining a long-sought goal, there were also deep personal disappointments and emotional earthquakes lurking around the corner. My relationship with my best friend and ex-girlfriend, Claire, was teetering due to my dishonesty. It would collapse in early May, and I'd never see her again.

I was also struggling with sexual addiction. Some weeks I was earnestly using every tool in my toolbox to change. Others, I was flat on my face and licking my wounds. I ended up paying over \$10,000 for a month of inpatient rehab at a recovery center in Chester, PA from May 10 – June 9. I learned a lot and it is what helped me not inflict any more emotional damage on Claire's life, but I quickly went back to my old addict ways after leaving.

By July, my "morning pages" disappear. In November, some writing resurfaces, but only a dry list of what I was doing each day. In the interim, I had gone back to working at the same job I had before my walk – something I'd vowed many times not to do. Like I said, *humbling*.

If any person is tempted to think themselves a hero in their own story, let them keep a candid journal for a while and then go back and read it years later. It has disabused me of any such notions. Without going so far as to label myself a *hot mess*, there are points during 2010 when that was a good descriptor. Enough contextualizing from the safe distance of half-a-generation hence. You are here because you want to read how my life felt *as-it-was-happening* in the year of our Lord, 2010. I was 36 years old when the year dawned. What follows is ... *Life Itself*.

Sat, Jan 30

Back to the morning page I come. Into the field of glory I skate, trying to get myself psyched up for some essay writing in the month ahead. Morning pages are one of those weird things that are always a good idea but which I resist like the plague. Why am I afraid to create, even when it has the freedom to be stream of consciousness? What am I afraid might come up? The Truth? Well, I am very aware that the first time I did morning pages over in the beginning of 2004 it made itself mighty clear to me that I was ... nay, am ... a sex addict. Will I ever really be sober until I give up something deep inside of me that I haven't been willing to let go of for anyone? Who knows.

Today is a cold Saturday at the tail end of January 2010. It has been six years since I did morning pages with any regularity. Six fucking years. Wow. Time flies when you are a sex addict. But seriously, my situation is much different now at 36 than when I was 30. I live on a different coast. I have proven to myself that I can plan out and execute something I really want to do (well, the essay writing remains to be seen). I am in zero, and I repeat zero, debt. And even though I am not sober at least I am fully aware of my compulsive behavior and aren't fooling myself about it.

I just got back from three days in PA where I got to see my parents and Endel and Carolyn and Dell and Kelli and the kids. It is always good for me to spend time with people. Oh, I also saw Robert and Julie. I got treated to many dinners and lunches and I got to pick up an extra car that I will use for the next two weeks driving between NYC and Hebron. My goal while I am at Mary Emmas is to write for between 5-6 hours a day. That means between 8-10 and then 11-1, then a nap at 2 and then writing again from 4-6. Then I can read at nights.

I finished *Committed* by Elizabeth Gilbert and have now started reading *Invictus*. I think I feel a reading crunch coming on. I haven't been a big reader of late - at least for the past few years - and it feels good to drift back into the pages of some good books. It is certainly a more productive activity than obsessing about acting out or giving myself negative self-messages about my future employment possibilities.

I don't have too much to say today. Claire is making breakfast and talking to be about Regis and Kelly. Now she just talked about Food Inc, which I already saw. I have been thinking about setting up a Netflix account today. Tomorrow I am playing tennis with Ray.

I am scared that my essays aren't going to be any good. That I won't be able to find the right voice or the right focus for them. I need to keep reminding myself to write for myself. I am the one and only audience. Say what I need to say to me. If at the end of this project I have written something that I find interesting and makes me laugh, mission accomplished. That is all I am trying to do. I need to keep drilling home that point in my psyche.

Looks like we are having pancakes or waffles, which we haven't had for a while. At my parents' house I had a bunch of blueberry muffins which were very good with butter. I should call Dick and Margaret and Andrea today. I owe them calls. Maybe even Buford too. It would make him feel good.

I wonder what apartment I will get. I wonder what job I will get. I feel deep down that I can't go back to working for Simon. Not now at least. I need to create on my own. I am looking forward to working back with the International Center on Thursday nights. That'll be fun and I enjoy meeting the people there.

Next Sunday is the Super Bowl. I must send Ivan or Marco 20 bucks depending on who wins. I think it

will be the Colts. We shall see. I will watch it at Ray's house, as usual. I remember last year's, right when I had decided to do the walk. It has been a good year since then with a lot of challenge, a lot of blessings and a lot of growth. Overall, 2009 gets a big thumbs up. I wonder what my 2010 experience will be. Wonder, wonder, wonder Seacrest out.

Mon, Feb 1

I have had a couple of very restless days. My mind is charging ahead of me, challenging myself to tell Claire how my feelings have changed and how I now longer think that there is any chance of me being able to be monogamous or in a relationship. Ray counseled me to give it some time last night. That probably is the wise move for me, but is it the best move for her? I just have felt no energy toward developing what we are sharing together. None. Nada. I remember when we first met. She was all I could think about. I would have done anything and everything to build something special. I was still under the impression at the time that my addiction to sexual fantasy could be cured or at least mitigated by the "right person". That was another learning I was due to have. Today I know that is not the case. The addiction burns on, able to find its oxygen in other places even within the start of a new relationship.

Let's be honest here. I am not capable of being in a traditional relationship. If I am not fully sober - and I am a long way from that or from even feeling the energy to invest in that process - I will remain a single man. Here is my fear. While I know I can enjoy being single while still relatively young, what will that look like when I am older? Chances are that it won't be as much fun and games when I am not as physically attractive as I am now. Sure, there will be the internet and the phone lines - those are the process parts of the addiction - but partners won't be so plentiful.

Yesterday I was thinking of long-term companionship without the romantic element. How is that not an option? It is rarely, rarely seen in our society. We are so drawn to the concept of romance that we almost instinctively believe that it must be present in one's core long-term relationship. It is kind of silly really. If I don't want kids - and I don't think I do - why does there need to be that romantic element at all? Why can't I live with someone who doesn't want to be married but who enjoys my company?

I am afraid of telling Claire this. I mean, hard core petrified. I remember vividly talking to her on the phone from Bay Minette, AL on December 23rd, trying to convince her I hadn't been telling the whole truth in DC when I said I wasn't capable of monogamy. Now I have to tell her it turns out I was telling the full truth there? Ugh. I feel like such a dipshit. Why do I hurt her so effectively when that is never my aim? How can I be so unintentionally cruel to someone I care so much about? It seems like one of the great paradoxes in life. So how should I tell her? And how soon? These questions are bouncing around in my head without end. My instinct tells me better sooner than later. Don't draw it out, for her sake. Honestly, it isn't like I am going to change my mind. My mind might change, but the realities of what I am capable of right now won't. They haven't changed since I was in LA. All that has happened is the addiction has subtly progressed. Damn it is good. Addiction can progress even when it seems like you are working on it, or at least even when I have convinced myself I am working on it.

When I read in the newspaper about Tiger going to the sex addiction clinic and it described the disease as a "process addiction", it had an acute impact on my thinking. I guess I had never thought about it in such clear terms before. It doesn't make much difference to me how much sex I have. That isn't important. What I am addicted to is the ritualistic processes of communicating with women about my fantasies and desires with the possibility of indulging them. All that is required is that hypothetical

possibility. Nothing more. Therein, scanning the body rub listings on Backpage becomes just as much a part of the addiction - indeed, even more - than getting the massage. The heady excitement of the process, moreover, doesn't even carry with it the inherent let down and crash after the actual sexual act.

Claire and I watched a movie (well, Claire slept through most of it) called The Invention of Lying. It was based on a modern society that had not yet learned how to tell mistruths. If I lived in that society, I wonder what I would tell Claire this morning when she came out of the room. Sorry babe, but I've realized that I am far from sober within my addiction. What that means is that I cannot pledge to you that I can be monogamous and not have interactions with other women and hold true to that promise. I am just not capable of it at this time. I am truly sorry for having led you astray this past month is allowing you to think that I was capable of such a step. All I can say is that at the time I was telling you how I truly felt. It is a particularly sad aspect of addictive thinking that I can fool myself in that way. Please forgive me and accept me as a friend.

Later that same day, by email

Dear Claire,

You asked me last night if you thought we were conflict averse. I think for me the answer should have been yes. I have always been conflict averse. For what reason, I don't know. But I am sure that this tendency has crept into each of my relationships, including ours.

I mention that because what I am about to say is very direct and very conflicting and, as such, makes me very uncomfortable. I feel as though I need to say it and I need to say it now or else I will create a situation we have already been through and desperately want to avoid. I apologize for saying it in writing, but you know me, and I would make a mess of it were to I try and be as precise and direct in speaking it.

I am filled with a lot of sadness. A deep, deep sadness that is tough to describe. It is the sadness of someone who simply cannot seem to outrun the traps of my own mind - no matter how much my higher self wishes I could. It is a sadness rooted in the false expectations my own ignorance has created.

Claire, the simple truth is that at this moment, I can't take the stress, the inner pain and the frustration of not being able to act out. Since finishing my trip and convincing you to give me another chance I have realized that I was wildly unrealistic about my ability to maintain a monogamous lifestyle. I haven't acted out, but I have thought about it obsessively, more with each day that has passed.

I wish I was at the point where I could just accept that and move on. Yet instead it makes me angry at myself and that, in turn, has led me to feelings of depression and shame. I know neither of those feelings is healthy. The biggest shame I have stems from standing outside the Arby's in Bay Minette, AL on December 23rd, talking to you on the phone and doing everything in my power to convince you that what I had said in DC was not altogether true. Please know that I fully believed what I was saying that day. I remember listening to you talk about how you had come a long way in reconciling yourself to the reality that I couldn't be monogamous and that we wouldn't be together romantically. And I hear myself again, assuring you that I am serious in a way that in retrospect looks so utterly foolish. Ringing in my mind is your voice saying, "what if you change your mind again" and me saying so assuredly that it wouldn't happen. There is deep shame when I think of that.

I guess it is another lesson for me that a trademark of the addictive mind is that I can convince myself of something so completely at one moment and then realize not long after the fact that I couldn't have been more wrong. That's a scary thing to experience. I am sure that days, weeks and months from now I will go through spells of deep regret about saying these things to you and I will once again want to pledge to you that I can change, that I can be monogamous, that I can be your romantic partner. I will try my best not to do that, but if I do, please be compassionate even while knowing the reality of my situation.

Claire, I want you to know that the time I spent with you in St. Croix was a blessing for so many reasons. I got to go and support you as you said goodbye to your mother. As soon as she got sick, I felt intuitively that I should be there for you as a friend to help you in whatever way possible until the end of that ordeal. I am glad that I could be there to follow through on that commitment I made to myself.

The trip affected me in another way. Your mother deserved so much more from a relationship than what your father gave her. I shared a little bit with you about my reaction to your father. Now let me share it fully. Being around him made me very uncomfortable and even a little bit angry. On the surface I thought the anger was because I knew his history, knew how he willfully cheated on your mom, often neglected being a real father and yet still felt it necessary to try and blame you and others to mask his own pain. Yet deeper down, I see that he made me so uncomfortable partly because what I hated most in him is within me. Were I not constantly aware of trying to live in honesty I could easily cheat on a woman like he cheated on your mom - be the selfish, charming, good-looking guy with the secret life. That's why I was so uncomfortable anytime he was around. His glaring faults reminded me too much of my own.

Claire, you and I already dealt with the destruction of a dating relationship due to my cheating. I will not put you through that pain again. That is why I am telling you now before anything has happened. I feel like I owe it to you, to myself, and to the memory of your mother to tell you honestly that right now I cannot give you what you are looking for in a relationship. A big part of me wishes I could - has always wished that I could. The other part just wants to act out and medicate whatever it is that deep down I am running from. I am hoping this honesty will pave the way for you to someday find someone who can join you in a different reality. Someone who can create with you a relationship like Simba and Maria or Sturge and Joanne - not perfect, but a work in progress that is built on faithfulness. When that happens, I will no doubt feel conflicted, but I will be happy too. Happy because you are someone I will always want the best for.

I know that we will keep hold of the friendship we have sustained over these years. That will always be solid, built on mutual honesty, affection and shared experience. I know that in a pinch, there will always be a cold surface for me to sleep on in your living room. :) And when I get my place, know that you can always come and visit your former TV as long as it is within visiting hours. (I added this last paragraph just now, to add some humor to an otherwise sad email).

So much Love and more than a little humility,
Garth

Tues, Feb 2

My first morning pages in West Hebron ... ever. I am sitting upstairs at Mary Emmas in Rick's old room, in a rocking chair looking out over the driveway at the occasional car driving by. Mary Emma was just playing the piano, practicing for church this week. I woke up a bit later than usual at 9:05. She made a breakfast for me of eggs, bacon and toast. Doesn't get any better than that. Margaret called before I had the chance to call her. I told her I would stop down to see her and Dick around 4pm. It will be nice to visit with them. It never feels like duty to hang out with the Waites.

Last night Claire and I had a gchat, then a long talk on the phone. I got honest with her about what was going on and that I now realize I cannot be in the kind of relationship she wants. Thankfully, she wasn't surprised at all. She confided in me that she knew it wasn't going to work, and was kind of just waiting to see how it would fall apart. I was glad that I was able to be honest with her before I had sex with someone else. It feels like such a load off my shoulders, although ironically, I know have an ache in my right shoulder. The right side of my shoulder and back has been all fucked up lately. Maybe I should look into some acupuncture. Which reminds me: Garth, send in your medical insurance payment today and put in with it those last three host cards.

So now here I am, honest with the most important friend in my life. The relief is palpable. I said a few things on the phone with her that I had never said before, prompted by her observations. I admitted that my addiction is my best friend. On the face of it, it sounds horrible. Yet that implies judgment on my part and I need to get beyond that - beyond the shoulds. But beyond that, it is simply true. People don't often take into consideration that the thing about addictions is that they grew and prospered because they worked so effectively. Whatever it is that people are running and hiding from emotionally, their chosen addiction works in medicating that. If not, they wouldn't have employed it so consistently and to such good effect. The problem comes when the behavior brings unmanageability into one's life and, by definition, it always does. For me, one thing it absolutely precludes is a long term, monogamous relationship. I accept that now, once and for all. But surely it has other residual effects. It didn't stop me from walking cross country, but it certainly doesn't help me professionally. The time and focus I could be putting into finding a job often goes into communicating with women instead. That's just a fact.

I am about to find out how unmanageable it is going to make my life in this new era of Honesty 2.0. My first two years in NY, I had the built-in buffer of Claire's closeness and friendship. While we are still friends, it will now be a different kind of friendship. In that, our conversation that morning in Washington DC looms large. She asked, I answered and everything changed. The first thing I need to do, if I want to keep my friend the addiction, is develop a manageability index. I remember Susan Campling talk about this as a recovery tool. She called it a Craziiness index or something like that. I need to identify the small things in my everyday life that help me keep my life manageable. To wit: Working or being out of the house between 9-5 on weekdays; making my bed each morning; eating a healthy breakfast; brushing and flossing my teeth at night before going to sleep; not having a midnight snack after I cum; doing my laundry every week; giving myself an artist date; giving myself at least one outing with a non-sexual friend; doing some volunteer work; keeping my apartment clean.

Wow, my skin is dry. I need some moisturizer on that bitch. The birds on the tree in the middle of Mary Emma's driveway are active this morning. One has a beautiful red crown with a black and white design on its wings. Wonder what kind of bird that is. But getting back to manageability, one lesson I learned from LA is that I have to work. Have to, have to. If I want to keep this friend, I need to find a job and be out of the house during the week. Work as much as possible. Keep my hang out time with my friend to

the night and weekends. Oh, and that reminds me, money. How much money am I spending on my addiction? I spent 106 bucks on it last Tuesday I think. That was exactly a week ago. Just checking in and being honest.

It is funny that some six years after first doing morning pages in LA, the topic of my initial morning pages in 2010 is the same thing. Now *that* is an enduring friendship. Others might come and go, but this addiction has stayed with me. An addict with a high ceiling. I've always liked high ceilings. It reminds me of the playroom and that NBA nerf games. Five starters on each team, written down in a lined notebook. Each player gets a three and a two. Can score five points at a clip. You go seven or eight times around the lineup. Those were good times. The masking tape three-point line, the feel of a nerf ball in my hands, the innocence of childhood.

Writing is a powerful tool. It is difficult for me to do if I am not being completely honest. I believe that if I hadn't been getting myself committed to the act of writing, I would not have had the drive to get honest with Claire. Something about writing gives me balance. I think I would be mistaken in thinking that I need to write professionally, but for the best manageability of my own life, I need writing to be an active and consistent part of it. I can remember the toughest days on the road, those where I was most prone to negative future fantasies. They always crept up when I hadn't written in a while and when my blog was out of date.

I'm bargaining. I am bargaining with myself to keep my addiction. I will obviously get whatever learning is going to come from this. I can pretty much predict what Susan or Rick would say. Yet it will be my learning, and it will take the unique tenor of my own personality. I love people. I respect people. I lift up people's right to try and create their life without others taking advantage of them. I hope I can hold fast to those tenets while keeping my little friend and it if can't, I hope I am quick to realize it. Because I do have other options. I could try and get sober.

Sun, Feb 14

Good mood. Good mood. Good mood. It is Valentine's Day and I have been sober for over a full day and amazingly feel back in the flow of life. I need to find a better phrase than that. Flow doesn't quite capture the essence of what I mean but it comes close. It is like being in the Jetstream. Nah. I think Joseph Campbell probably has a phrase for this. I need to read some of his work again and see how he phrased it.

Anyway, I am at Claire's place and it is Valentine's Day morning 2010. Yesterday I drove up to CT to attend Kevin and Wambui's wedding. My enduring memory will be coming to tears as I drove while listening to Travis's "Sing" on the New Jersey Turnpike and then Heather Headley's "I Wish" as well. On that ride up, I gave a lot of thought to my need to surrender my addiction. Not to beat it. Not to will it away. Not to fight it every day. But to surrender. Surrender is the opposite of fight. It is waving the white flag and saying, you know what ... I'm not going to fight anymore. Instead, I am going to lay down my arms and fall into the arms of those that can support me - my higher power (that soft, sure inner voice) and the community of friends that I have and which I will be developing.

That is one of the reasons I thought it important to attend the wedding instead of staying another day home alone at the Radwyn. Making the effort to drive up to CT was reaching out to be a part of a community of people - mom and dad, the Footes, Wambui, Vanessa, Irene, Mary K - and in the end that is always the best choice for me. I had such an interesting experience alone at the Radwyn on Friday

which I tried to explain to the beautiful Claire last night as she was falling asleep. I love her. I related the interesting lesson I learned about calling the phone lines during the day and just feeling off. I wasn't in the flow. I was working against the flow, trying to get something - an orgasm - that wouldn't help. At this point I am just repeating an emotional and physical pattern that no longer serves me, but which is an addiction so is therefore beyond me choosing out of it. I must surrender. I shared with her about when I gave up trying to go against the flow and just went to TLA instead and got the DVD of Breaking Bad. How I came back and watched the three episodes and had some dinner and just sat there in silence. I got up and did personal care items that honor myself and my community - I rinsed the dishes and ran the dishwasher, I brushed and flossed my teeth and put in my retainer, I got into bed at a decent hour (11pm). I told her that I laid there and thought about my options. Did I want to call the phone line? I could have. But I didn't. I thought about how beautiful it had been when I was in college and how I liked being alone in my room at night, with the silence, with a book. That was before I started the lesson of addiction. I yearn for that again.

So I just lay there and sent Claire a text telling her that I missed her and I looked up at the wall and fell asleep. Keep surrendering Garth. Give up the fight. Makes me think of that Bonnie Raitt song, I Can't Make You Love Me where she says "I will give up this fight." It's not a fight. It's not a fight. It's not a fight. The path, my friend, is in Surrender.

On the way back from Niantic, CT I had a date to meet up with Diette. This brought up a lot of anxiety for me. I knew that when we originally scheduled this, the assumption was that we were going to meet for sex like we were used to doing before. Yet I no longer wanted that. To be honest, I wanted to just text her or email her and say we can't meet and then run and avoid her call or reply email and not see the damage I wrought. But listening to my higher power, that soft sure inner voice, I knew I could handle it differently and with more integrity. So I kept the meeting but asked to meet up at a restaurant. That gave us a chance to talk and I talked and talked and talked. I told her my whole story - soup to nuts - and she listened and tried to understand. And by the end of it (we ate at a Japanese place in the Palisades mall btw) she knew that sex wasn't going to happen that night. I was surrendering and telling her so. It is about coulds and not shoulds. I could make a choice that will lead me back to the Flow, and I could make a choice that would lead toward Alienation from the Cosmic Flow. I choose to keep Flowing.

I will just say that it couldn't have been a harder test of Surrender and I am glad Claire was expecting me at her place. Because Diette looked so fucking fine. Just like she was ripped out of the pages of one of my fantasies. High heels. Tight jeans. Whatever. I am not going to dwell on it. I choose to be her friend and treat her with the respect and honesty I hope people will give me. And thus another victory for Surrender.

I got to Claire's after getting some primo parking yet again and I joined her in bed to watch the Taboo episode on sex and relationships. They had a piece on a doll lover, young marriages, open relationships and finally a polygamous group in the UK. I was feeling needy and affectionate so I went out of my way to hold her. She didn't push away and was happy to be held, but when I tried to press it further, she said she wasn't going to allow herself to get turned on. Fair enough. I surrendered it. She did allow and even encourage me to talk to her and retell her the story of how much I loved being with her the other night when I spanked her and then fucked her without a condom. I told it in vivid detail and I think we both liked reliving it. Then we fell asleep. I don't remember now what I dreamt but I remember dreaming. It is that way a lot for me. Maybe as I do more morning pages I will start remembering and recording my dreams with greater consistency.

I find myself sitting here and daydreaming about meeting Dr. Lane to talk about Surrender and what it has meant to him in his teachings over the years. A paid session mind you, where I question him and ask his guidance about how to set yourself in the position to Surrender. What does that frame of mind look like? Everything else in our society is about doing. Doing, doing, doing. Earn your money. Resist your temptations. Win this person back. Yet surrender would seem to be the exact opposite. For instance - is surrender changing my phone number or keeping it? Changing it almost seems like I connect that action to some result. The result is going to be the result. It is an inner commitment to just give up. Give up that life. That inner lie. Learn my lesson. That will never make you whole. And even the fake, fleeting feeling of being whole that is sometimes there in the process is less and less reliable and more and more depressing because I see the pattern. When I was in my 20s and didn't realize the addictive nature of my sexual behavior, it felt great because I was medicating my emotions but wasn't aware of it. Now who I am fooling? Certainly not myself. It is time that I give up this fight.

It is time to Sing. SING. SING. SING. Because the love I give won't mean a thing, unless I sing, sing SING sing. What is singing for me? It is surrender to that which I can't control. It is seeking out and engaging with a community of friends who care about me and treat me with respect. It is believing in my power to create and for my creations to reach out and speak to other people. It is looking for a job at a company or organization in which I feel invested and challenged. It is having a home with arms that open wide and having people who love me always by my side. This is my life. This is my story and when all is said and done. May I live with no regrets.

Speaking of which, as I sit here I don't have any regrets. Without these lessons, I couldn't have sung the song I am preparing to sing.

Mon, Feb 15

I return to the page, in Bryn Mawr today, after an eventful Sunday. "Whoa Nellie" as Keith Jackson used to say. So many things, so many feelings, so many currents swirling around in my mind. Yet I press forward ... toward an inner New Orleans.

Yesterday started so familiar. I woke up with Claire. We cuddled in bed. It is so comforting to be next to her ... but is it triggering too? Ah, the age-old question. Anyway, it happened and I enjoyed it. I went out into the cold and walked to Salata while she meditated and picked us up some breakfast sandwiches and some yogurt. We ate and had coffee back at her place and then I suggested a movie. Good job, G-man. So we went and caught the 12:50 showing of *Up in the Air*, directed by Jason Reitman. I really, really, really (Aaron hates that word) liked it. I liked the look of it, I liked the pacing, I liked George Clooney's performance. It gave me a lot of food for thought. This was a guy whose credo goes against everything I wrote about and experienced on my walk across the country. Yet I was drawn to him. Because in him there are seeds of me. Certainly, seeds of my addicted pain body that wants to isolate and keep on moving. His relationship with the traveling woman would have been perfect for me in my addiction. Hang out. Have fun. No attachments. No responsibility.

I liked how the story wasn't tied up in a nice, neat Hollywood ribbon. Its themes weren't black and white. They were gray. He made an attempt to reconnect and had met with disappointment. Wounded, he returned to the air. But he had connected with his family. They had welcomed him home.

After the movie, it wasn't too cold, so we walked back, picking up some Roma pizza on the way. The Sicilian slice was DA BOMB. I gotta say that was one of the tastiest slices I have had in a long time. Back

at her place Claire heated up some pasta (with anchovies ... yuckers), kale and parmesan cheese and made a salad that was super tasty. I left there to go to Shari's place. The place looked exactly like I remembered it. I think it will be a wonderful space to welcome people and to start forming the community I seek in NYC. We hung out for a while and listened to music, including that piece from the movie Ghost Town and a Kings of Leon song, and then started watching a little tube. The conversation turned to memories and to sex and I powered it along, somewhat hesitantly at first, but then with specific intent. I got a vision in my mind of how nice it would be to masturbate with her again, like we had before. So that conversation picked up steam and before I knew it, I was asking her straight out.

From then on, the die had been cast. We ordered food, I moved to the couch while we waited for it to come, we fooled around a bit and then we ate dinner at the table. Stepping away from physical contact gave me time to ponder and think while eating my Calamari Salad and Tom Ka. I realized that this wasn't a life furthering decision. It would be a life diminishing desire. So in the kitchen as we were cleaning up, I told her that I was having second thoughts and it would probably be best if we didn't do anything physical. She didn't disagree. She was amiable and we continued talking about this, that and whenever. Then, stupidly, as I was getting my coat on, I touched on sexuality again and showed her two naked photos of me. That clearly touched something in her. And when we moved to the door to say goodbye my resolve withered in about 3 minutes of indecision and hesitation. We ended up naked on her bed, first masturbating together and then having sex. It is the truth. It happened. No regrets. But it taught me something about the need to constantly focus on surrendering. Surrender, surrender, surrender.

I surrender that memory and forgive myself.

I walked to my car and returned a phone call Claire had made to me. Isn't it always the way that she calls right when I am doing something I am embarrassed by. It is freaking uncanny. That led to one of those awkward phone calls where I told her I had just hung out with Ray, but I was really sitting in my car on 148th street about to go to Ray's. She got curious as she always does and asked me about Shari. I told her we hadn't dated but we had met online. Really, I should have said I am not comfortable discussing it. We are friends now and that's all that matters. Regardless, it was crazy awkward because I knew I was being dishonest, and I hate that. Why do she and I press so many of each other's buttons? It bummed me out after a great day together to have to end it on that note. On Valentine's Day no less. But again, I forgive myself. And I move on.

I went to Ray's and we had a typical Ray's place hangout on his sofa watching TV and flipping around between All Star Game, old To Catch A Predator, the McGwire Interview and a showing of Clear and Present Danger. I told him the Diette story. He was flabbergasted by my will power. The bottom line is that he doesn't know how deeply I have struggled with all this stuff over the past six years. Even the word struggle makes me realize that I haven't surrendered I don't even know what surrender looks like ... am trying to get in that Flow. To grasp that Light. Surrender is not Struggle. It is laying down your arms to the Universal Light and saying lead me. And trusting that where you end up is where you were meant to be and the route you get there is the road you are meant to take. The events of yesterday were the road I was meant to take.

I left Ray's house this morning at around 8:30 and got back to Bryn Mawr in great time. I listened to the end of the gun podcast from This American Life and then listened to music for the rest of the way. I played some of my SURRENDER playlist - Sing by Travis, Surrender by Cheap Trick, I Wish by Heather Headley, Say What You Need To Say by John Mayer, Grateful by Whoever and then I listened to Hairspray for the PA bit of the trip. I really like that Hairspray movie soundtrack. I never feel like dancing

so much as when listening to some of those songs. It instantly put me in a good mood. Oh, I forgot an important song on my SURRENDER/SOBRIETY playlist - Somedays by Michael Franti. Good times.

I got home and found mom convalescing with a cold. I organized my room a bit (personal caretaking), took a shower, shaved (ditto) and got some food while thinking about my calendar for the next few weeks. Overall, my focus is not on writing so much as it is on Surrendering my addiction to the Universe and spending time with my community of friends. Everything else, as they say, is just gravy. For the rest of the day, I hope to look through my pics to narrow down those I want to use in my video. I want to go out and look for Frame Stretchers for Claire's painting. And I want to rent another disc of Breaking Bad. And I want to call Endel - the E Diggity - and see if he is around to hang out sometime this weekend. Can't think of anything else too pressing.

Today, by the way, would have been Clara's 59th birthday. May she rest in peace. I can picture her gravesite there in St. Croix. I am grateful that she brought such a loving and forgiving daughter into the world. And while I am surrendering, I surrender the relationship Claire and I have or will have to the LOTMH. That's a wrap, foxes.

Thu, Feb 25

I have decided to start a 28 day exercise that Claire told me she used to do at USM. She made a comment last night that she thinks I would really like USM. I remember thinking to myself, she is probably right but not saying it. The second thing that came to mind was all the acting out memories I have in LA, and Santa Monica in particular. But that is beside the point. I also have a lot of great relational memories there too. Like Marco's birth. And a bunch of Kushner Locke things. And Aaron and I first coming to LA years and years ago, with so much to learn.

Anyway, this 28-day exercise is about creating a new positive habit. The intention is to find a job that is part of an overall authentic and abundant life. Its specific focuses each day are (a) writing these morning pages for 30 minutes, (b) having 30 minutes of physical activity or play (c) forgiving myself in the mirror each morning and night (d) having one recovery conversation on the phone or at a meeting and (e) read a bit before I go to sleep. Five things. I need to do each every day and check off that day. If I miss a day, I have to go back and start at one. The goal is to repeat this for 28 straight days.

Yesterday was a really positive day in many ways. I was feeling a little nervous in the morning about giving my presentation to the DMR staff meeting. That nervousness is always there when I am about to do something public and I have an expectation for myself to do a really good job. I got dressed in my black pants, blue shirt and Claire's black cashmere and went in, telling myself to be confident and to just talk to the group as I would have talked to any one of them one on one. My walk was such a big part of my life for so long that I knew it would be easy to talk about if I just projected confidence and was myself. Sure enough, that is just what happened. I wasn't at all timid, I told a lot of jokes, I shared my video and I got a lot of really encouraging feedback from those who were there. I got a chance to talk to Becky, Pascal, Carolyn, Alex, Spencer, Frankie, Bagu and others and then went to lunch with Simon, Joey and John at Nectar (I had the seafood fried rice and, of course, the mini donuts). We talked about my trip, about Joey's friends I stayed with, and about fund raising which I asked them about. Joey and I need to find a time to have dinner with his whole family now that I will be back in New York.

Yesterday goes to show again how I thrive when I force myself to be with other people and interact with them at work and in personal conversation. I simply do not do well if I am constantly isolated from real,

face-to-face relationships. When I got home, I went online to do some emails while watching ESPN. I started chatting with Claire and she sent me some comical photos from her past that a past dating partner (Dmitri) had reluctantly sent her. He was trying to hold back some racy pictures of them kissing so that she would meet him to see them. Meanwhile, dude is married. I don't think that is something I would ever do with a woman, but I know I have been manipulative in other ways. So the annoyance I felt at him I knew was partly a projection of annoyance at myself. But I forgive myself for betraying my own trust for so many years, and for manipulating other woman in search of an addictive payoff. I forgive myself completely.

Then I went down to Philadelphia to have dinner with Angela and Gabe. I had offered to pick up cheesesteaks and fries because they have an infant again and I didn't want Angela to have to worry about cooking. Their son Jonah was full of energy, with a big head of hair. Caleb was trouncing around the house in a pair of long johns pulled up high on his waist. They were both quite comical, talking at loud volumes, and very enthusiastic to get their chance to talk. Angela and Gabe were as they normally are - Gabe the pleasant, eccentric thinker and Angela the soft and accommodating listener with a good sense of humor. Angela is a dear friend - non-judgmental but insightful. I am glad I have stayed in touch with her all these years.

After Gabe took the kids up, Angela and I talked on the couch for a little under an hour about all sorts of things. We talked about Ray and Maria. We talked about high school reunions. I shared with her about my addiction and how that impacts my relationship with Claire. She listened lovingly and it felt good to have that honesty. That is what I need more within safe, non-triggering relationships. From there I drove home, listening to the last of my Savage podcast, and then some of Carolla, and got here in time to watch some of the Olympics with mom.

I talked to Claire on the phone starting around 9:30. She sent me a funny text saying, in half an hour I done talking until tomorrow. Turns out we went about 22 minutes over as usual. She told me she had laughed more in the last 40 minutes than she had all day. That was a really nice compliment. She told me more about the 28 day exercise that I am starting. She shared about her annoyance with Dmitri but how funny the pictures were to her. She talked about how she is not a disciplined person, but she sees me as being more so.

I got to bed before midnight and read some of the Peace Pilgrim's Steps to Peace pamphlet, which I find very centering and helpful. Then I drifted off to sleep. I woke up at 7:30 to large, weighty snowflakes drifting down to the earth. Today is going to be a very, very snowy one. I really hope it doesn't fuck up my frame shipment. I would love to get that done with John on Saturday and have it to hang at Claire's house Sunday evening. That would be wonderful.

Here are some of my intentions for the day beyond, of course, my 28 day intention. I am finishing my resume and working on a cover letter to go with it. I am putting back the boxes of pictures underneath the bed. I am collating pics of me and Claire for future use in a music video. I am changing my phone number with ATT. I am composing an email that I can send to a few women who I need to get some space from: Diette, Kady, Stacy, DeeAnn, Andrea, Susan, Lisa - explaining to them that I am getting some help and I won't be reachable by cell phone or email. That is not the solution. But it is a tool. Oh, and I should send an email to LaVaughn on Facebook and see if she got my email. Oh, and I should send Claire an email right after this with my picture from Lehigh with a funny comment, or an attempt at humor at least.

I need to buy a calendar too. Maybe a really, really cheesy one. Anything will do. Something I can see and touch and physically cross off tasks. I want to give Rick a call tonight. I want to walk in the snow to TLA and get a video. I want to pelt someone with a snowball. I don't want to, but I should, do some shoulder exercises. Where did I put those exercises anyway? All in all, this will be a full and satisfying day.

Fri, Feb 26

I am sitting in bed here at the Radwyn in Bryn Mawr and looking out the window at 6:46am to see a blustery, snowy morning. The maintenance crew is outside trying to clear the sidewalk and roadways. It looks very, very uninviting out there and it occurs to me how blessed I am to be safe, warm and dry inside.

This is Day 2 of my 28 Day Experience and I am very grateful to be having the experience of building new, more positive habits to take the place of those which haven't supported an authentic expression of myself for a long, long time. I didn't sleep very long last night. I think I went to bed around 12:15 and I woke up around 5:30. I know I dreamed pretty intensely but I can't remember any details. I always have the most intense dreams when I go to sleep without engaging in my past sexual compulsive behaviors. Laying in bed I found myself having a lot of fantastical thoughts, mostly about sex with Claire. The thoughts weren't all about sex though. I would start projecting into the future and worrying about what work I will find or if x, y, or z will happen. In short, I wasn't being very present laying there in bed. So a few times I would just try and concentrate on my breath and concentrate on being grateful for another day of health. It occurs to me that I should type out the Five Remembrances to help really imprint them on my mind. Here goes:

I am of the nature to grow old. There is no way to escape growing old.

I am of the nature to have ill health. There is no way to escape ill health.

I am of the nature to die. There is no way to escape death.

All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.

MY ACTIONS ARE MY ONLY TRUE BELONGINGS. I CANNOT ESCAPE THE CONSEQUENCES OF MY ACTIONS. MY ACTIONS ARE THE GROUND UPON WHICH I STAND.

Those are beautiful, because underneath them lays a really profound ability to be grateful for the youth, the health, the life, the people which compose my life in the present tense ... all with the awareness that all those things are impermanent. I am really happy Claire sent me that article. Yoga Journal seems to have some good shit.

Day one of my 28 Day Experiment went very well. It was snowing those big, heavy flakes most of the day. I wrote my morning pages from about 8:00 to 8:30 and then quite frankly I can't remember what I did until I took a walk at around 10 to go to the TLA video store. It was really wonderful to walk again. Even though the snow was blowing in my face I was wrapped up enough that I wasn't cold. And the feeling of putting on a podcast and getting out there to stretch my legs was amazingly refreshing and familiar. The store wasn't open yet, but I used the opportunity of being by an AT&T store to go in and

change my cell phone number. I decided to do this because I don't need the unnecessary temptation of receiving calls or texts from women I have acted compulsively with. It cost me \$36 but was well worth it. I grabbed a cup of coffee at Cusi and then walked down Lancaster toward Borders. I was listening to Simmons talk to Seth Myers and Jack O about the Olympics. I walked past the Film Institute, past the bench I sat on before going to my first Bryn Mawr Hospital SAA Meeting. I got a calendar for \$1 at Borders with the theme of Bassett Hounds. Needless to say, the selection wasn't overwhelming, but I wanted something to hang on the wall where I could cross off every day of my 28 Day Experience. I walked back to TLA and got an EXTRAS (Gervais & Merchant) video and then headed back home.

I committed myself to work on some projects yesterday. One was putting up the boxes with pictures. I did that. Another was getting the phone number changed. Likewise, I did that. I had wanted to finish my resume, and I have nearly done that. I must look over the changes Claire incorporated and give a final edit. Another goal was to write some of my acting out partners and explain that they wouldn't be able to reach me and then put their email addresses in my Gmail filter. I did that as well.

I worked on my resume while my dad and Heidi had a long chat on the phone. Good old Heidi. She is truly a wonderful family friend - personable, funny, loyal. Then I chatted on Gmail with Claire for a while, talking about her hair and a variety of other not too important things. Yet it was nice to have that connection with her.

We had pork chops and gravy over rice for dinner. And a salad of course. Spinach salad isn't my favorite. I find it tends to be a bit dry and it is hard to get the middle pieces of spinach covered with the right amount of dressing. The bottom is always good, but the first few bites are awkward. Had a piece of apple pie for dessert. Mom really put her foot in this pie. It was so fucking good. Just the perfect mix of apples, sugar, crust, etc. We were talking about marriages at the table and which ones have struggled and managed to stay together and which ones haven't. We talked about Cathy and Bill and their breakup. We talked briefly about Ty and Michelle and the troubles they are having. I made the comment that no married person should ever send an email or have a conversation with a member of the opposite sex that they wouldn't be comfortable if their spouse was copied on or was present for. That might seem a bit stringent and repressive to many people but I, better than most, know just how important those boundaries are.

I decided to take in my first recovery telephone meeting at 9pm. Before that my parents and I watched the documentary on the Peace Pilgrim. All I can say is Wow. What a unique life she led, especially from the age of 44 onwards when she was a walking pilgrim for the rest of her days. One thing that struck me, and which I noticed in her writings as well, is how important she felt positive thoughts were. She shares that if people truly knew how powerful thoughts are, we would never have negative ones because we would know that we are only hurting ourselves. That is very, very interesting to me who - like most people - struggle with negative thoughts. Oh, this just came to mind. Yesterday it occurred to me that I should re-read A New Earth by Eckhardt Tolle. I read it right before my walk and I remember thinking this is a book I should re-read multiple times for the rest of my life. I think now is one of those times. In fact, I am just about to finish Chuck Klosterman's collection of essays, so I can bring A New Earth back into the rotation once I find where it is. It might be in my gray bag. I should check.

Anyway, Peace Pilgrim was truly one of a kind. She was so assured of her place in God's plan and so positive and friendly and grateful. It was like she was the character from Happy Go Lucky but without the hint of sadness hiding just beneath the happy veneer. She had truly given up her attachment to material and bodily needs. She could go long periods of time without eating. She could sleep in all kinds

of environment. She was committed to inner and outer peace and she lived what by all measures could be called a life of creativity, joy and service to others. Her service was just more extreme than most.

My first telemeeting was a positive experience. It was rather large - I believe 36 people in total. I introduced myself during that section of the meeting but I didn't give a share. One thing I liked about the format is that I could listen and when someone said something insightful I could jot it down in my notepad to reflect on later. I have never been able to take notes like that in meetings, yet in this format it seemed natural. And even though I wasn't sharing, I definitely felt the healing energy of being on the phone with so many people who at that moment were committed enough to their health and joy that they had come together to share that experience together. It was definitely a net positive. I do need to go to some SAA meetings in New York City though so I can get materials and be able to read, etc. when called on. I am trying to decide if I should go to that SRA Monday night meeting after arriving at the Olson's this coming Monday. I think I will. Being back in NYC could be challenging and triggering, so I need to really reach out and put down some roots in the recovery community. Remember: Finding Meaningful Work. Find a Supportive Community of Friends. Be of Service. Those are my three most important short term (and long term) goals.

Sat, Feb 27

I arrive at the pages almost at 7:30 on the dot. I am driving up to see John and Bobby today, so I wanted to get an early start to arrive around lunch. I had some vivid dreams last night. Wow. I just remembered them. The hiding from the people who were out to kill me. I can't remember many details, but I do remember that. It is amazing how fast the details of dreams slip away from me.

Endel and I saw Shutter Island last night so it isn't surprising my mind should be full of strange images and visages. While I was watching it, I knew there would be a twist at the end and it occurred to me that Leo's character might be the one who was delusional. Although one thing that doesn't make so much sense is when the woman wrote RUN down to him. She would have known that he was an inmate there who was very dangerous. Why would she have said run?

Anyway, it was good to see my brosef Endel. We ate at Champs afterwards and had a waitress who set the bar pretty low for excellence in that profession. It seems like he and Ashley are getting pretty serious. I don't know, but I just don't see him marrying her. I mean, I think they could be a fine couple, it would mostly depend on him not overthinking it, but I see him with someone who is really, really smart. He craves that. I don't think that I do as much. Claire is obviously a very intelligent woman, but she would never call herself an intellectual. She has spiritual intelligence and insight that I find very impressive. I am drawn to that more than I would be to a woman who had some specialized scientific knowledge or a large store of facts at her disposal. Claire does know about gigantic pigs though.

Yesterday I completed day two of my 28 day experiment. In fact, I got twice as much exercise and had two recovery related conversations. Today I think my exercise is going to have to come in the form of my back and shoulder exercises. Although depending on the temperature up at John's maybe I can take a walk before dinner or something. I will need to make a recovery related call. I have been thinking it would be nice to say hi to Charles after all these years. If not, I can always call Bob or Lane from the Wednesday night meeting. This will undoubtedly be the most challenging of the habits to abide by. I am doing it though. I am reaching out and talking to healthy people and being of service to them and to myself.

These are truly precious days. These are the days, as Billy Joel would say, to remember. When again in my life will scales of this size be falling from my eyes, giving me a chance to see the world and the people in it in a new light. It has been so long, and new more healthy habits are so needed, that I feel fortunate to be doing the work and creating the discipline to live a more creative, joyful and selfless life.

When I was walking I wouldn't question it too much when I saw something that appeared to be a good picture. Just snap it and move on. As I set up these habits in life with the intent of getting to a place where I am led to find out what meaningful work I would like to seek, I realize I need to do the same with ideas for that work. So, in the past few days, these ideas have resonated with some part of my soul. Teaching math. Working with developmentally disabled people. Going to get my counseling degree to work with other addicts, especially sex addicts. (Reminds me of the saying that you shouldn't be a math teacher if math came so easily to you ... you can't relate to the struggle. Man, can I relate to the struggle). I have thought about fund raising for a nonprofit I feel passionate about. Or for a nonprofit of my own. On that point, I want to remember to talk to the international students I am partnered with at the adult school to see what kind of services and welcome they could have most used when they first got here (and now). I have also thought about getting into TV. Maybe speaking to Kelly about that. Freelance writing is something else I have considered. I want to have lunch with David Pierce and ask him about his work doing that so far.

Yesterday Dad and I took a walk to TLA and then to the bank after Kate stood him up for a walk of their own at 4 bells. I could empathize with Kate letting plans drop without calling. That is a sure marker of not doing well. Isolating is the WORST possible behavior for me. There can be nothing worse. That is why the calling other men and having healthy conversations is so, so important. Spending days all by myself at my new apartment will not be "what the doctor ordered" so to speak. I should really reach out to hosts others because having them around and being able to be of service for them will be very, very healthy for me. As will be going to meetings and making some new friends that way, and through other volunteer opportunities. I do want to look into volunteering with the developmentally disabled. I feel like I have a definite heart for them. So does Aaron by the way.

I wonder what he is up to. I realize that I don't think of Aaron all the much anymore. Somehow I have put my feelings toward him in a chamber of my heart that isn't easily accessible. I still love him obviously. But I have let him go. I am not attached to whether or not he gets help, or calls me, or sees his kids. There is no anger there really. He is on his path. And all that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them, be it Aaron, or Claire, or Mom and Dad.

The Five Remembrances. And the most interesting of them to me is the last: My actions are my only true belongings. I can not escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground upon with I stand.

Let me tell you, it is feeling nice to not have to worry about a rogue email or text sending my mind into a fit of temptation about an acting out possibility. Let me state this loud and clear from my heart and soul to my mind: I can not control my sexual desires outside a committed, monogamous relationship. I can not enjoy watching pornography, having phone sex, intriguing on the internet, getting massages, etc. without my life going right back to the statis it has been in since I was 22. Simply put, I have experienced powerlessness over managing those behaviors for so long that I simply give up. And I have never been happier to do so.

I am going to take a shower, give myself forgiveness and affirmation, get a bite to eat and load up the car. All I need are my toiletries and one extra outfit. I am going to sync my iPod and listen to podcasts and do some singing in the car on the ride up. Should be fun. Have a couple of BS reports locked and loaded.

Other things I did yesterday: Watch For Once in My Life. Get the Frame in the Mail. Shoot hoops with Dad and realize how weak my shoulder was. That is pretty much it.

Sun, Feb 28

I arrive at the page in bed looking out at a white morning in Schoharie, NY. I intended to wake up at 7:30 but I pretty much slept right through my alarm. I had woken up at 5:30am for the second straight day and had problems getting back to sleep, even despite one of the most comfortable beds I have slept in in ages. I don't know what these sheets are made of, but they are soooo comfortable. And the blankets were crazy warm. All in all, I slept about 9 hours last night if you don't count the tossing and turning and intermittent fantasizing around 5:30.

The kind of snow that we got on Friday and yesterday makes for amazingly beautiful views out the window. It clings to the limbs of trees, creating a Narnia-like winter wonderland. Unfortunately, it also creates the need to shovel. This morning JM, John and I are going to have to go outside and have a shovel party. That will not be fun. This snow is wet and heavy, so I need to be careful not to injure my right shoulder any more than it already is.

Yesterday was a full day. I left Bryn Mawr around 8:40 and drove straight through to Schoharie, arriving a smidge past the four-hour mark. John and Bobby's house is as pristine as normal. We had a lunch of chips, grapes and ham sandwiches and talked easily about all sorts of things. Bobby is always extra interested in what career path I am going to take. That is never my most comfortable conversation because it is so up in the air right now, but I was happy to engage with her and do a little bit of on-the-spot brainstorming about the topic. After lunch John and I tackled the canvas stretching and framing. Luckily, he had all the right tools - the vise grips, the hammer, the glue, the wood tacks, the heavy duty stapler. We did our best with the stretching but since the canvas had been rolled up for so long, it was tough to get it as tight as I would have liked it. The painting looks beautiful, but I hope Claire won't be too dissatisfied with the parts that, upon close inspection, have a bit of a give to them. I think she will be grateful to have it done for free, but we will see. I can honestly say that I did my best and that is what is important.

I had called Bob from the Paoli SLAA meeting before arriving at the house and left a message asking him for John R.'s number. He called back and left me a message with it. So in the afternoon I made my recovery-based phone call and reached out to him on the phone. He was clearly surprised to hear from me. I had never called him before. He was sitting have pork buns at Ollies on Broadway during a break of some piano playing he was doing at Juilliard. John is a supremely anxious kind of person. He kept mentioning how busy and stressed he was. I asked him if he had been going to meetings lately and he said he had fallen off. I could hear the discomfort in his voice. I have had the same in the past when I have fallen off from meetings. I gave him some background on what I had been up to and then told him he should feel free to call anytime. Since I first met the guy, I felt like I could be of service to him. He seems so uncomfortable in his own skin, but during his shares I have seen a deep-seated desire to get better that it made an impact on me. He is a perfect example of the power of negative thinking. He struggles with that. As the Peace Pilgrim said, if we knew how hurtful to our lives negative thoughts are,

no one would dwell on them. I am trying my best to take that lesson to heart. For John R. it is a distinct struggle.

After calling John R. I watched some TV and did exercises for my shoulder since I couldn't take a 30 minute walk. Today I am planning on getting to NYC at 3:30pm so that I can walk for a half hour before getting to Claire's. I also need to call Rick for my recovery call and tell him that I won't be home in time to meet up with him and try to find another time. I am still wondering whether or not I should come home next weekend. For the cost of a 10 dollar round trip ticket, I don't see why not. I think I would be safer in Philly at this important stage of my recovery than in NYC with Claire gone, but I don't know. Next weekend might be his retreat anyway, in which case it wouldn't make sense to come back home.

I really will be making a push to go to as many meetings as I can while I have the time to during my days in NYC. So, for instance, this coming Monday I am going to go to the beginners meeting on Lexington. I mean, that couldn't be more perfect. It is a built-in way to get a temporary sponsor which is something I desperately need. I need that sounding board for some of my decisions with Claire, etc. I have surrendered my relationships with any other woman who I have been addictive with, except Shari. I have surrendered that internally but have to keep in contact with her since she is my landlord, but I have no desire right now to act out with her in any way. I really do want to fully experience the uniqueness and preciousness of this new time of sobriety. It brings with it challenges but greater opportunities. My mind (which is the enemy in the addictive process) and my body are having to get used to a new equilibrium. I don't get to run to masturbation to medicate uncomfortable feelings. Instead, I should name them, be willing to share them with others, and realize that feelings aren't facts and that they will pass with time. They come and they go. I don't need to react.

It is like I am Lewis or Clark. For these 28 days, everything I see each minute of each new day is a new discovery. I am seeing the same world, but now I am relating to it as a sober human being and as such, it is a new creation. I cannot have any sexual interaction with Claire. I keep surrendering that desire, and will continue to, but I realize that it is a strong one. Luckily, I don't think she has any plans to make a move on me, and I will be very careful with her. I will see her today for about four hours, but then next weekend she will be gone and the weekend after I won't see her until Sunday and that will be with my parents. So that is another 14 days right there. I need this time alone to continue to release my and her relationship to the universe and to build a community of male contacts that I can lean on and talk to in this process.

John's TV is really nice. He has this HDMI cable that connects his laptop to the screen and it allows him to play Hulu or YouTube videos or anything else right on the big screen. Fantastic. It is especially nice for sports. I like the way they have their library set up. It is very comfy, with a breakfast nook and the TV and sofas on one side and his desk and painting area on the other. It is my favorite room in their house, although I like this guest room as well. They have so many things. I just can't relate to the desire to accumulate all this stuff, but they have done it in a fashion that is quite beautiful. Bobby is an interesting one. Just an observation, but she talked about having a hard time watching too much of the Olympics because of the overwhelming amount of money they have spent on it in the face of such worldwide need. Yet look at this house and all they have, which is so much more than they need, yet she doesn't seem to connect the dots there. Listen, I am the first to realize how powerful psychological projection is when it comes to our defense mechanisms. I have engaged in that kind of rationalization in many different ways, especially as it relates to my addiction. But it goes to prove Peace Pilgrim's point once again. The inner journey to peace is the most important because our inner life is reflected in our outer life and collectively the inner life and priorities and actions of the world are reflected in how our world

looks. To complain about it without looking inside first and asking – am I living out the same desires I have for the world? – is to be stuck in the same cycle moving forward.

Mon, Mar 1

Mahnin'. That is the traditional Cruzan greeting in the morning. I am up and at 'em at 7:30. My lower back is a bit sore from all the shoveling yesterday, but that isn't surprising. That snow was heavy as hell. Today will be another busy day, so there is no use dilly dallying. Got to get up and make the donuts. Ah, yes. I just shifted the pillow behind my head and that feels much nicer. My eyes are also coming into focus after a hard sleep. Dad was in the bathroom so I had to throw some warm water in my face out in the kitchen and mom intercepted me with questions about John and Bobby's, but I didn't keep talking to her too long because I know these morning pages need to be the FIRST thing I do every day, much like meditation is the first thing Claire does. In fact, I can almost guarantee that she is doing it right now.

Yesterday was pretty busy. Woke up late at John and Bobby's but I was still the first one up. They have quite a gang of cats who pounce around whatever room they feel like being in. After writing I settled into the library to watch some tube. John joined me for cereal a short time later and we watched a little Anthony Bourdain. I got a kick out of his visit to Baltimore where he ate both with the real Jay Landsman and with Snoop. She was telling him what projects she has on the burner and mentioned that her own line of adult products is one of them. Say what? Anyway, Bobby got up a little after us and went downstairs in her robe to start breakfast.

John went down and then I went down a little after that and we continued our conversation from the day before over breakfast of French Toast, fruit salad and crisp bacon. Bobby really does a gallant job of preparing food with her various physical disabilities. She and John have an interesting way of interacting in the kitchen. She is very bossy toward him. He seems to take it and do what she says, but not without the occasional snide comment. It isn't so much that it feels awkward for a visitor, but enough to notice. I have to say, I don't know how Bobby does it with her health. Getting dialysis everyday much be so draining and painful and uncomfortable. I know that one of the Five Remembrances is we are of the nature to have ill health, but with Bobby it has seemed like she has suffered so much more than normal. I guess we all have different lessons to learn and different karmas to process, but it seems like an unfair load.

JM called when we were about to have brunch, leading to a funny conversation about whether they could come over. In short, Bobby had John say no, then call back and say yes. By the time he called back JM and Michele had decided to stay and eat at their house. A short time later I got to see JM and Jimmy when I went out shoveling. Hot damn was that snow heavy. I tried my best to do some serious leg lifting but I could feel my lower back straining, nonetheless. It gave me my opportunity, however, to get in my 30 minutes of physical activity, so I was grateful for it. That is the first snow shoveling I have done this year, and probably the last, so it is good I got some in.

I hit the road around 1pm and blasted on into New York. I listened to Simmons and Jacoby talk reality TV, including the first participation of the Sports Gal, who has a curiously pleasant voice. Then I listened to an episode of TAM about Parent Traps. The introductory story wasn't so interesting, but the second and third got progressively more engaging. My favorite was the one about interspecies parenting with the psychologists and the Chimpanzee who ultimately ended up in the Gambia. That was quite fascinating. I got to NYC in 2 hours and 45 minutes flat and Claire took the painting in from the street while I circled and looked for a parking spot among the snow filled curbs of Manhattan.

We spent the next 30 minutes hanging it but in the end it looked fantastic. She was really happy with how it turned out and didn't quibble at all about the quality of the stretching of the canvas. The interesting energy between the two of us was back. I wasn't sure if it was because I am sober or whether it was because she was feeling the situation out and wasn't confident of how physical she could be with me. We looked at some pictures she had put in her web album, including a cute one of her and Simba when she was in high school. Then she insisted on getting me dinner, so we ordered and then walked down to El Paso to pick it up.

She ate way too much. I ate just as much but didn't feel so stuffed as she did. Like a snake who bust its belly, she slithered on to the couch and I spooned her. Gotta say, it felt so good. She always feels so good. We lay there and watched 60 minutes after we finished watching SNL and then we started kissing. It felt even better to kiss her. She asked if this supported my process and after enjoying the smooch-orama for a while we talked about it laying there, so close to each other. Part of me wanted to spin it in a way where I could take her in her room and do something - anything - sexual with her. But deep down I knew that wasn't the healthy thing for me to do. So I explained to her my inner circle behaviors. In short, ANY sexual behavior that was alone or was outside of a committed, monogamous relationship. Wow. That is a big step from where I have been. From where I have spent the last 14 years. Yet it is "what the doctor ordered" in the sense that ... let's not fool anyone here ... I have never shown an ability to enjoy those behaviors and not have it throw my life into a chaos of misspent energy and drained creativity. After walking for 120 days and sampling what it feels to be in the Universal Flow of Life, I want it full time and this is my INDISPUTABLE first step toward giving that to myself. Sure, one of the hardest things is not to be sexual with Claire. But if we are ever back in a long term, monogamous relationship, we will have the chance to be sexual again and she can be sure that she has all of me. Not just part.

I got on the road to Philly by 9pm as planned and again there was no traffic in my way. I decided to listen to a SOF program called Einstein's God. It was good, yet not an instant classic, and after that I listened to a bit of Spring Awakening until I crossed onto the PA Turnpike. At that point I brought out the big gun - Terry Gross' interview with Dan Fante. I first listened to it on the day I walked from Culpeper to Unionville, VA. It was a sunny day and the colors were gorgeous. I had walked a good stretch and already listened to a BS report and crested a hill when I put on this interview. It was more powerful even the second time around. Dan Fante started writing when he finally got sober from drugs and alcohol. For him, it was around the age 44. He never thought he could write a book, but from doing his fourth step he knew he could write a page a day. That is what he did, and 27 years later he has written 10 books. It was so comforting and inspiring to hear him talk about reaching that point of surrender. Of just giving up. He had such an openness and sense of humor in talking with Terry that I found myself thinking, if she ever interviews me this is the exact spirit I want to have. He mentioned a song sung by a blues singer named Levitt that I need to check out. A Long Time Coming but Change Has Come or something like that. I've heard it before on the soundtrack to that program about the Lehman book, but I am not sure if it was her version. Terry noticed that Dan was very emotional and asked if he had been like that before getting sober. Of course he wasn't. Everything was medicated away through the addiction. I can relate Dan, I can relate.

Positive thoughts. Positive thoughts. I am not afraid of my power to create, to be joyful and to serve myself and others. Life is constantly changing and I accept that this morning.

Tue, Mar 2

I arrive at the page on Park Avenue and 88th street. What an apartment this is to be sitting in the middle of NYC. I am lounging in a king-sized bed looking out from the 11th floor over Park Ave itself. It is so quiet from up here. I can only vaguely hear the outlines of the city coming to life below me. No honking horns. No buses ploughing through the streets. Just a dull hum of activity.

I am very, very grateful for the Olson's hospitality. I felt kind of bad that I couldn't have dinner with them last night, especially since Mary had gone out of her way to cook Salmon. Maybe another version of me would use that guilt as an excuse to stay for dinner instead of following through on my plan to go to the beginners meeting at St. Jean Baptist. But I sensed that the most important thing for me right now is to dive headfirst into the community of recovering sex addicts here in New York City and to start developing some bonds of friendship with those people. Sure enough, after the meeting I stood around and fell into conversation with Hussain, a resident from Brooklyn. We had a nice chat - he is in early sobriety as well - and we ended up exchanging cell phone numbers and he told me that I can ANYTIME. That was really, really nice of him and I am grateful for it.

Sitting there in the room last night listening to the shares, I noticed how little gratitude there is. This isn't a judgment, just an observation. So much of the focus, as Claire would say, is on what they are trying NOT to do. I have followed suit with that in the past. Something about how our minds (*the enemy*) work want to make that the priority. And yet, as Peace would say, why not focus on what is working and what we WANT to do? Right now, what is working for me is waking up and writing these pages first thing in the morning. I kind of smile inside of myself when I think of 30 years down the line and imagine 365x30 of these pages on a hard drive somewhere, being a freestyle chronicle of my life, my thoughts and my experiences. How would that not be a great thing? That is a habit I am forming. It is one of the main focuses of this 28-day process.

My intention with this process is to find meaningful work that supports an authentic experience of living from my heart center. I don't know where I just came up with that phrase heart center, but it feels right. It is not my mind. It is from where I feel, not from where I think.

Speaking of thinking, Claire said yet another poignant thing the other night when we were rolling around with each other on the couch. I was talking about doing something to her and she could tell that I was continuing to think about the scenario in my mind. "You are still playing with it," she said, implying that I should just let it go. Let it Go and Let God. That's a great heart centered slogan. The mind creates these thoughts and, as the creator, has no self interest in letting it go. Instead of letting it go, it wants to let it grow. Look at me. I'm now the hip-hop-apotamous. But seriously, every day here in NYC, surrounded by this mass of humanity, these people who are part of the life force with me, I will have plenty of opportunities to either let it Go, or let it Grow.

From my perspective as a surrendered addict, why let it Grow? When it comes to surrender, I like to grasp on to the analogy of confederate soldiers after Lee surrendered at Appomattox. Undoubtedly, they still wanted to fight for what they believed in. But they knew, indisputably, that it was over. They couldn't fight the power of the Northern army. The proof was in the battles lost and the destruction wrought. Just so is the proof in my self-battles against my behaviors lost and the subtle but pervasive destruction my addiction has wrought on my finances, my creativity and my relationship. So I have turned in my gun. I give up. No matter if I see a Yankee smirking around or plundering and that desire to fight wells up in me, what is the point? Why play with that idea when I can't follow through with it?

Likewise, why play with fantasies or ideas about women I see on the street, or even with Claire, when right now I can't do anything about it? I just need to let it go as soon as I can.

When we were talking about discipline the other night and I pointed out that she is very disciplined in how she does meditation and (on a lower level of energy) brushes her teeth she started thinking about it. She mentioned off-hand that what meditation has given her is the experience of feeling thoughts come up and bring her down to that level of energy and then letting them go quickly and rising back up to the energy level in her forehead, above the mind. I found that interesting for a couple of reasons. First, I enjoy being reminded of what her experiences bring to her and seeing meditation as a gift for her, and a gift for our friendship, rather than as a competitor for my time. If I am completely honest, I will have to admit that there have been many occasions where I have resented her taking the time to meditate because it took time away from me. No longer. I really value that she takes that time, just like I take the time to type these pages and to find 30 minutes a day to walk. That's an hour right there and that is non-negotiable, just like her 2 hours is non-negotiable. That is something to be protected.

I hear stirrings in the apartment, and I assume that either Mary or Eldon is up. Maybe both. Here is my plan for today. I will shower, get some breakfast and chat with Mary for a bit. Then I will make my way on foot down Park Ave to 68th street. At 68th street I will cut over to Lexington and see if I can't find a wifi-enabled coffee shop to work until 12pm. At 12, I will go to the meeting at St. Barts on 50th & Park. I'll grab something to eat and then maybe go get my haircut, then find another place to work on the West Side and come back here at 5pm. 9 to 5, baby. No skimping. I need to get back gradually into that mindset of having a structured time when I am out of the house to be working on meaningful projects.

Thinking back to yesterday, there weren't so many big happenings except it being my first day here at 1075 Park Avenue. I had tea (Rooibus) with Mary and talked about my trip and her kids (2 boys bracketing a girl) and the eldest's wedding last year in Cape Town. I got here around 4:30. The bus trip to New York City was packed. Every seat taken after we stopped outside of Cherry Hill and the seat in front of me was inclined WAY back. I got through it though without too much inconvenience. I listened to the TAM podcast about the AMA and the definition of homosexuality as a pathology up until 1973 ... the year of my birth! Holla. It was a well-produced program and it again stirred that desire in me to see if I can't learn how to create audio pieces like that.

Nothing much happened at home before I left. I woke up at a good time, did my laundry, replied to a few emails, wrote my morning pages, had a bite to eat, packed, etc. All in all, a creative, joyful and service filled Monday. Well, not so sure it was service filled, but I know that my conversation with Hussain must have blessed him a little bit, because it certainly blessed me.

I need to go online today and buy my roundtrip bus ticket for Saturday afternoon and Monday morning. I still can't get over what a great deal \$5 each way is. I wonder what the temperature outside is today. The sun is shining, which will help if I walk down the West side of the street. But I still don't have my wool hat and scarfs. I need to pick them up tonight when I am at Claire's.

I sent her a funny text last night where I said, "I am in bed at 10:30 watching CSI Miami. I have turned into you!" That was some affectionate ribbing because I love the fact that she doesn't chase the night. I love that term. Thanks to Billy Boy Simmons for bringing it into my life in his column about NBA All Star weekend. Worldwide Wes encapsulating the choice I have faced so many times in the past. To chase the night (and the orgasm) or not to? Now I surrender. No more chasing the night. There is always another day to dawn. Make your next decision in the morning light.

Wed, Mar 3

I arrive at the page a few minutes later than normal. I hit snooze. Someone had to do it and that someone was me. I got in a little late last night, so I wasn't as rested when the alarm went off this morning. I was at Claire's last night picking up some clothes and hanging out with her and I ended up holding her in bed for a while. That meant I didn't get back here until about 12:30 and didn't get to sleep until around 12:45.

I briefly thought about what it might be like to call the phone line when I came in last night. I allowed my mind to play with the idea a little longer than probably was good. Ultimately, I realized that it was no use. Surrender means total surrender of my right to engage in those behaviors. I read a few lines and went to sleep. End of story.

The bottom line about this period of withdrawal and this period of celibacy and of not being in a relationship is that I am learning about myself. I am rediscovering myself. It is amazing to realize, but there has never been a one-, two- or three-month period where I haven't medicated my emotions by acting out. I want to meet that guy.

Hmm. I wonder if I could mesh my that guy essay with the that guy I don't know yet because he had been hidden under my experience with compulsion. I talked with Claire about that last night as well. The term compulsion versus the term addiction. Does it really matter? Twice yesterday I came across people in the media who flippantly dismissed the idea of sex addiction. It seems like it is starting to have a real backlash. I don't take offense to it. That is just their belief. I don't need to take it on and get caught up in a push and pull between right and wrong. I have my experience, and they have their experience, and we will leave it at that.

I looked outside and saw some wind-aided snow flurries. Suddenly the thought of walking all the way down to Borders isn't as appealing. At least now I have a hat and gloves. I like that workspace though, so I think I will do it anyway. As to where I will work from this afternoon, I don't know. I have been wanting to go to La Gallette to do some work, but I don't know when.

I volunteered to pick Claire up at the airport next Monday night. I must make sure that is copasetic with the Ray-man. She is going to be gone from Friday night all the way to Monday night. In a way, I think that is good. I love being around her but it takes my focus off of my recovery a little bit in that I desire her so much. When I am of service to her, does that come from a genuine place? Or are we unconsciously still trying to complete one another rather than just be ourselves? She said she isn't in a place to date and I admit that I was happy to hear that. I don't particularly like the idea of her dating. And since I am not dating, it gives me hope. I know that I need to keep releasing Claire and the love I have for her to the universe. I do. I genuinely want the best relationship for each of us when we are individually ready. But it is hard to imagine ever being drawn to someone - warts and all - like I am drawn to Claire.

I talked with John R. yesterday. That guy is a bundle of fear and negativity. I mean, that isn't who he is, it is just what he is experiencing. I do appreciate that he is so open and he always answers the phone. I am glad I called him yesterday because it would have been easy to check the recovery conversation goal off because of attending the lunch time meeting and talking to bad breath John. Wow. Nice guy though. Also in attendance were Joseph and the Technicolor

Dream Scarf. Dublin Jonathon. Curly haired Kevin. Eric, who reminds me of someone I am not sure of yet. And a few other blokes I am not sure of their names. Oh, an Asian guy said hi to me and I didn't really listen to his name. I dislike when I do that.

Today I plan to go to the evening meeting up on 108th. Supposedly it needs some attendance help and I can possibly be free on Wednesday nights to make that a regular meeting, even when I am working. I think I attended this one before and you have to climb these weird stairs and it is in a little room. Wonder what kind of attendance there will be. Either way, I want to be there.

Do something for myself today. What would that be. Oy vey, it shouldn't be eat something. I caught a back view of myself this morning and the love handles were not pretty. They were not pretty at all. I think I am eating way too much sugar. Hopefully the increased walking with the warmer weather will help. I was surprised to see that Daylight Savings is about to come around. I remember being with Peggy in Johnson City when the clocks moved back and I got an extra hour. Good times all around there.

What else happened yesterday? I relistened to Terry's interview of Michael Chabon and to her interview of Johnny Cash. I got my hair cut. I walked all over Manhattan. I went to the 1pm meeting at St. Barts. I ate at Subway for lunch and had a slice of Sicilian on 87th street for an afternoon snack. I bought my greyhound ticket to Philly and back for this weekend for only 10 bucks. That is still mind boggling to me. I went through and made a nice email group list for my walk. Today I am going write an email saying hi and giving my new contact information and a link to my video for those who may have not seen it.

Also, I want to call Decorum and Core staffing and see if I can set up an interview with them for possible temp placement. Now that I have my clothes, I can do that whenever. Oh, and I need to enter my unemployment hours today. And I need to send a card to Ivan and Marco and then maybe call them tonight. If I don't get Charles or Hussain on the blower they could be my recovery call. I know Dad talks to them every week but I am thinking maybe I could talk to them once a month and keep the lines of communication open.

La da da da dah. I don't have much else to write this morning. Ate some good banana bread last night and getting ready to down some again this morning in two and two. Mary has been very, very hospitable and I am trying to be open to a good idea for a "gift" to give them next week to say thanks for this kindness.

I wonder how cold it is out right now. Regardless, a brisk walk down Park is better than pussying out and taking the subway. \$2.25 cheaper, too. This seems like a longer 30 minutes than previous days. Maybe it is because I feel a bit in a rush since Mary said they are going to eat earlier today. I just looked. Only 4 minutes remaining. The four minute countdown. Let's talk TV. I watched American Idol last night and Ellen DeGeneres was noticeably funny. And Kara was noticeably less funny and amusing. Having Paula gone totally changes all the dynamics at play.

Thoughts are things but they are not facts. They can be let go of. When they are negative thoughts, or defeatist thoughts, or addictive thoughts, the best thing to do is let go of them as soon as I am aware they are present. Those don't do me any good. Immediately I should replace them with a positive thought. For instance, a blessing on the woman who I might have noticed that she be free and happy. Switch up the focus so to speak. At least I won't have to see Claire until next Tuesday. Hopefully but then I will be 13 days into my 28-day process. Almost the halfway point. But I am getting ahead of myself ... for now, I only have today, this very moment and I need to be Present in it.

Thu, Mar 4

I arrive at the page with my mind in pseudo-mutiny over my desire to surrender. My mind is not happy. Not happy at all. Last night it wanted to act out something fierce. It was bored. So bored. And it wanted excitement. It got me thinking - from whence shall my excitement come if not for, pardon the pun, from listening or watching women cum. That has been my primary form of adrenaline-inducing, serotonin-releasing excitement for a long, long time. So now that I sit here, starting my 9th day of sobriety and my 8th day writing morning pages, my mind is none too happy that it doesn't have that serotonin coursing through its synapses.

Laying in bed this morning, I was reminded of why Claire finds meditation so helpful. It gives her practice, every day for two hours, of releasing thoughts as they come up and then rising above them to lift her energy above that of the "brain". Let me say this unequivocally. I am not my mind. I am not my thoughts. I am not my emotions. I am energy - a soul - the is part of God and connected with all other souls. Ultimately, I don't have to do anything or refrain from anything or earn that. In this world, my actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. I know what the consequences are of me acting in sexually compulsive ways ... and I likewise am 100% sure (from 14 years of experience, mind you) that I cannot be sexual outside a committed relationship without it immediately becoming compulsive.

I reached out to a lot of people yesterday. I went to the meeting on the Upper West Side and met Parker and Damon and Corey (for the second time) and Sky and Kevin (for the third time) and Dan and another guy (Frank maybe). It was a good meeting. It felt, deep down, like my home meeting. Then after the meeting Dan and Corey and I went out for some fellowship. I had an amazingly good turkey burger and we talked about a wide range of things. I am a little bit anxious about Dan asking me about his girlfriend Kathy and my extra room. I realize that I am uncomfortable "letting people down". I will sit with it some more, but right now that soft, silent voice is telling me that it is okay to have that room be a short term stay service to others. I am not comfortable with anyone staying more than two weeks. I need to speak my truth and not feel bad about it.

Yesterday I really made some good progress in reading through my blogs and making notations about their themes and how they might fit into a collection of essays I would then publish. More and more I am gravitating to using a Blurb book to publish in hardcover format. The steps would be as such: Design how I want it to look with pictures using dummy text. Then complete the essays, find someone to edit each, and then put them in and publish a book for myself. Through the blurb store anyone could buy it for cost. Secondly, I will redesign the website to reflect the blurb book in online format. I will ask both Brian Atkinson and David Pierce for suggestions about web designers when that time comes.

It has been heartening to go back and read my writings from the road. It shows that I can be creative when I am engaged in authentic living. Even though I was acting out on my trip the demands of the road kept me in positive habits - the fellowship with people, the exercise each day, the writing every other or every third night. Those are some of the exact same habits I am cultivating through this 28 day process. The fellowship through connecting with other men on the phone and in the meetings. The exercise at least 30 minutes a day. The writing and editing to continue to stoke my innate creativity. The affirmations and the forgiveness are not things I did on my trip, but ones I want to incorporate into my life. The reading is a bonus.

I sent out a mass email to my hosts and those who actively supported my trip yesterday and I got a number of very encouraging responses. Today when I get to the Borders I am going to begin my work day by responding to each of them. Also today I am committing to sending both Marco and Ivan a card with money. I will continue my projects of re-editing and notating my blogs and writing a cover letter that can be used for the temp agencies I will be contacting, if needed. Today I pick up hard copies of my resume from Claire. I should also look into many of the websites given to me at my meetings downtown for my unemployment coverage.

I have stopped writing. Stream of consciousness man. Snap to. You don't need to make any sense. You don't need to ponder as you mentally wander. You just need to type. Type, type, type. Because the love you give, won't mean a thing, unless you write, write, write, write.

This bed is really big. I haven't used more than half of it the entire week. I am so out of practice in having a king-sized bed, ever since I left Los Angeles I have been marooned on a full size. I don't quite know what size Shari's is. I feel like it might be a queen. I am looking forward to being able to design that guest room in the image of my walk. Pictures ... sayings maybe even some artifacts. The color blue is calling out to me for the walls. Maybe with a beige of some sort.

Yesterday I had lunch at La Gallette. The woman that works there is so cute. I am letting it go. Either way, the Theibou Yapp is awesome. Always is. She knows I get it every time. I was glad to see that there was a large group in there for lunch when I arrived and that two other people came to eat before I left. I stayed for about two hours and enjoyed working in that window seat.

I bought a book yesterday called You Say Tomato and I say Shut up. It was written in He Said/She Said style by a creative married couple about their experience with marriage. The man calls himself and his wife The Gurus of Wrong. I was drawn to how well they used humor in digging down to some deep truths. Furthermore, it felt exciting to me to be able to write something so honest. I bought it and am doing quite an extensive job of footnoting it with my thoughts and jokes before passing it along to Claire. I think she will enjoy it and hopefully get a few laughs.

I spend a lot of money in NY. I will be changing that pattern as soon as I have my own place where I can cook, etc. I will be eating breakfast at home, taking lunch to work, and not eating out for dinner more than once a week. That will be my next 28-day process once I finish this one. Buy a good cookbook and work my way through it. Like I told Corey last night when he commented that it doesn't seem like one can walk to New Orleans in four months, you can do a lot by just doing a little each day. Kind of like Dan Fante said he didn't think he could write books, but he knew he could write pages ... and that now he was completing his 10th book. I enjoyed his personality on the radio and I mentioned that to Terry Gross in the email I sent her yesterday. Speaking of which, I am quite excited to hear Ricky Gervais interviewed on Fresh Air. I must download that as soon as I get to Borders so I can listen to it as I walk today.

So let me get a gameplan for the day. 9:30 - 12:00 will be emails, editing blog posts, checking in on some job websites, writing Marco and Ivan. Then the meeting at St. Barts. Then Lunch with Claire. That will put me at about 2:30. From there I will go to the library from 3-5. Back to the house for a snack maybe at 5 and then to the M3 bus on Madison to go up to the volunteer place for a 6:30 start. Andele!

Fri, Mar 5

I arrive at the page much later than usual. I called the phone lines last night which meant I didn't get to

bed until 2am. Doh! I woke up first at 8:30 and my body was like, nah, don't think I am ready to face the day yet. I closed my eyes for another young doss and just woke up again a few ticks shy of 10 o'clock. Ah yes, the consequences of chasing the night. It always means that I am tired the next day and my schedule gets thrown off.

Well, back on the horse. A new day has dawned. Present moments keep presenting themselves and I keep living in them.

Yesterday was a pretty power packed day. I spend my morning working in Borders on Park Ave as usual, then hit the lunchtime meeting at St. Barts. Since the chair wasn't there at the allotted time to start I ended up chairing the first 3/4 of the meeting. I was glad to be of service. I didn't stick around after the meeting because I had a lunch date with Claire to work on my resume. I picked up a pricey salad and we shared that and some of her left over pasta and we chilled in the break room. She was wearing black on black, which I love, including these tights that looked awesome on her.

After lunch we went into her office and as we started to work on my resume she got an email from Marlyn. Ugh. The blight of my existence. Maryln, who I befriended and then stabbed me in the back by inserting herself in Claire's life when there was NO call to do so. Whatever. I have to keep letting it go. That is her journey. Claire has her journey. I have my journey. Let's keep it moving.

After I got my resume printed out, I walked all the way from 39th and Madison back to 88th and Park. That's a little over two miles and around 45 minutes or so of good hoofing. I listened to the Eckhart Tolle podcast again. It always has different cogent points that float to the surface with each listening. Yesterday it was his talking about pain bodies as separate entities. My desire to act out is a pain body within me. Ah, there it is. Being able to be aware of it is step one in loosening its grip on me. That is a positive step. Saying, there it is. Not out of judgment, not getting all mad at mySelf (because honestly, it isn't mySelf in the truest sense, it is a separate entity) and then seeing if I can just give it space and awareness and let it go.

I tried a little meditation yesterday afternoon because I figured that once I am aware of the emotions and feelings of my pain body becoming particularly intense, I should start exercising the muscle that would allow me to accept it, not REACT to it, and then lift above it. I meditated for a few minutes and then I am pretty sure that I fell asleep for the remaining time. Before that I had tea with Mary and Eldon. Poor Eldon, I can tell he is really worried about his lung test results. As anyone would be. He is still moving very, very slowly. I really pray that works out for him.

I took the bus at 6pm up to the MMLAC for my first volunteer gig of the year. It was great to see some familiar faces. All the students have changed though. It would have been nice to see Diallo et al. Instead, I had Ewine, Madeline and Virginia. Ewine has solid intermediate skills and can understand English very well. Madeline is a beginner still but has some ability to talk. Virginia is straight up beginner. She doesn't talk English to anyone in her life it seems and everyone who she works with speaks Spanish.

It just occurred to me that I should write out some typical questions that come up in a conversation with a native English speaker: *Hi, what's your name? Where do you live? How long have you been here? What do you do for a living? Do you have a family? Do you know where the ____ is?* Things like that. Really practical things.

I have always found that three is a good number to work with in that environment. So, after that was

over, I did a combination walk/bus back to the Olsons, picking up some Vanilla Haagen Daas (on sale) on the way and had a late dinner. Eldon and Mary joined me for a cherry pie dessert. By the way, I ate my first full artichoke yesterday. Gotta say, it ranks right up there with soft shell crab as something that feels to me like entirely too much effort for too little reward. That's just me though. What do I know?

Back in my room I called Rick and left him a voicemail confirming dinner on Sunday. Then I talked to Ray for a while before midnight. I was really hoping John or Hussain or Charles would call back. But they will sometime. No biggie. I should just keep going to meetings and keep making calls and I eventually will get calls coming my way.

Tomorrow it might get up into the 50s. That would be nice. I think the meeting I am going to near 14th street is at 11:15. I am guessing that 74 city blocks down and then a couple avenues over would take me about an hour and a half. If I left here at 9:30, I would be safe I think.

Oh, I need to print out my bus ticket today. Also I need to call Decorum and Core staffing. And go to the meeting at St. Barts. Those are my priorities today. Should text Ray about his car for Monday night. Let's see what else. Text Claire safe travels to Atlanta.

I feel like the 28 minutes should be up but the ringer hasn't gone off yet so I will just freestyle it for a while. What were the Lakers thinking last night losing to the Heat? Come on, man. Show some scrotum, Kobes. You gotta pick it up a notch. The Marriage Ref was so banal. I wasn't invested at all. I can think of ten to fifteen shows I would much rather watch than that. Really Jerry? That is what you come back with after having one of the most innovative sitcom concepts of the 90s?

Wow, I still have a full five minutes left. I don't know what else to say other than keep coming back. Keep coming back. Keep hanging out with guys who can relate to the pain body that arises in me. Maybe I should give him a name. What would be an appropriate name. Not Shelly. Nah, whatever. But relationships as in friendships and my connections with people are what is going to help my life be about service to others and not to myself. THAT should be my focus as the Peace Pilgrim says. Not me, me, me. The disease of me. But others, others, others. If I want love, give love. If I want sobriety, be there for others who are trying to get sobriety. That is just how it works. And around and around the world goes. Where it stops, nobody knows. I am glad that my 28 day process continues into day 9. I look forward to seeing the guys at the meeting and sticking around a little bit to chat and visit.

Fear that comes up could be another pain body. The fear I have around my professional course is something else I can sit with and make room for.

Sat, Mar 6

I arrive at the page. It is the weekend, baby. Yet everyday has been essentially a weekend day for me since August 29. It looks like another nice day outside my Park Avenue window. I am going back to Philadelphia today for two nights after I attend the "flagship" SRA meeting in the city. I have been hearing about this meeting for a long time and have never gone. It will probably be the biggest meeting I have attended since that weekend meeting of SAA on San Vicente in Los Angeles. I think that was a Saturday morning gig too.

I had a long talk with John R last night. He said he is going to try and come this morning. It would be good to see him. He dropped the bombshell that he used to obsess about me in some of the PA

meetings. I am being facetious. It wasn't a bombshell at all. I could tell that he was a little nervous about being around me. He is an interesting guy. We all have our problems, but he seems so obviously to be the confused jumble of anxieties and fears. I feel oddly drawn to be his friend though. He feels like people will hurt him. I always feel the opposite. Maybe there is something, friendship wise, that we can give each other.

I had another walking-heavy day yesterday. I got a late start because of calling the phone lines but eating my breakfast later meant I got a chance to speak to Eldon one on one for a while. That conversation was quite easy and I enjoyed his company. He is a matter-of-fact guy, not prone to emotion or feeling sorry for himself. He and Mary had been anxiously awaiting some test results on his lungs and thankfully they came back yesterday with news that was much better than what had been feared. It wasn't anything fatal. They were both visibly buoyed by the news and last night we all had a dinner of pasta and salad and a glass of wine together while watching a bit of PBS NewsHour. Which just goes to show that Newshour is the favorite program of educated retired people. Its demographic is older than a Lawrence Welk reunion tour.

That was a horrible joke. It is tough to be funny when it's this early. Yesterday, I walked all the way down Park to 50th. Then I walked from there over to the Time Warner Center, then back to Park and 50th. Then I walked to Claire's office. It was a strong stroll. I accompanied her to the airport since she was feeling a lot of anxiety over her trip to Atlanta to clean out her mother's apartment with Simba. I wish I could have gone. She clearly wished the same.

I said goodbye to her after sitting a few minutes in the airport and took the bus back into Manhattan and pretty much came straight home. I thought I might go to see a movie with Ray but when I looked at what was playing nothing called out to me. In fact, the only thing I heard was a little voice inside my head that said, wow, these movies all suck.

Instead, after dinner I watched a melodramatic genealogy project with Sarah Jessica Parker and then had the mother of all long conversations with John R. I followed through on the nighttime part of my 28-day process after reading some more of the funny book I got about marriage. I was in bed before the strike of midnight.

The pain body came up and I told myself a few times that it is okay to let it go. It is okay to let it go. I am okay. And it IS okay to let it go. I will be fine. I will be absolutely fine. In this case, the pain body did cause me to react and I called the lines for a couple of hours, ultimately talking to this divorced woman from Long Island who I ended up having phone sex with. For the second straight night, I went to bed around 2am. Ugh. Bad times. I need my sleep!

The thing is my sobriety needs to be by Grace. I am not in control of my addictive acting out. I am just not, and it is dangerous for me to think that I am. Here is what I AM in control of: getting myself to a meeting as often as possible. Making a recovery call every night. Being honest with people who care for me when they ask how I am doing. Writing these morning pages every day. Exercising. Taking care of myself by keeping my apartment clean, cooking and getting into a good structure of work and service to others. I can be in control of asking the Light of the Most High for the grace of sobriety, and maybe it will be given to me. Do I BELIEVE that Grace will be given to me? Let me think about that. Yes. Yes, I do.

It is interesting that I believe so because I haven't experienced it yet. It was somewhat easier for me to walk to New Orleans staying with strangers because I had already had the life experience of strangers

taking me in, showing me kindness, and feeding me. I have never had the experience as an adult of freedom for sexual compulsivity. Yet I believe that by grace, it will be given to me. That thought kind of makes me smile.

I hope that my bus ride today won't be as packed as the one on Monday. Either way, I can't quibble with a 10-dollar roundtrip to Philadelphia and back. I need to download podcasts when I go in to eat breakfast and I also need to print out my greyhound ticket. I originally planned to walk down to the 14th street meeting but due to waking up late, that won't be possible. I will have to train it and then walk over from Union Square.

Ain't we lucky we got 'em – Good times! David and Abby might still be at the Radwyn Manor when I get there. Ah, the innocence of babes. What am I talking about though ... this is a precious opportunity for me to have the experience of having something heavy lifted from me. What about this isn't interesting and life affirming?

I zoned out for a second. Eyeballs staring off into oblivion, their lenses covered in softening Vaseline. I will take a shower when the timer goes off. Warm showers feel so freaking good. Cold showers suck eggs. I remember how painful it was to take a shower in Guatemala with only a thin stream of water tricking out, often only lukewarm or downright chilly. There is nothing fun about that. I am grateful that this morning I will have a powerful, hot stream of water caressing my body and allowing me to get clean.

I send the Light to Claire and Simba and Bethany today. I also send the Light to Aaron, wherever he may be. To Marco and Ivan as well. Love those guys. Reminder to myself: send the cards I wrote in the mail.

I have run out of things to say this morning. Maybe my life needs to get a bit more interesting. Here is the bottom line: I am building a community of friends here in the recovery community. I am trying every day to be of service to someone. I love Claire deeply and want to be there for her in any way she sees fit. But I also release my attachment to a specific kind of relationship with her to the universe ... for the highest good. I want to keep being honest, refuse to develop secrets, and concentrate on developing the habits that I can control.

Sun, Mar 7

I arrive at the page feeling GREAT. I got tons of sleep last night, falling out at 11pm and waking up at 8am, and I got to talk to Claire first thing after waking up. The apartment is quiet with my parents off at church and I can just enjoy a Sunday morning by myself. I used to LOVE this time by myself. Read the paper. Get a cup of coffee. Think about interesting things. I think I will do just that after I finish these pages, take a shower, say my forgiveness and affirmation and get a bit of breakfast. Meaning, I will walk somewhere and get a cup of black coffee and read my book. In fact, that sounds fantastic. Grace.

Yesterday turned out well. I finally made it to the 11:15 meeting on 13th street and enjoyed the energy in that room. Afterward I was able to talk to Parker and Joseph but missed a chance to say hi to John R. as he was gone by the time I looked around for him. Hussain and Sky were also there. As was Dan and a number of other guys I have seen at meetings. The room is all exposed brick and there are a smattering of female group members as well lending it a less hard edge.

The bus ride back to Philly was full to the brim, but after a delay just before the Lincoln Tunnel it went smoothly. I listened to Simmons and Klosterman Part 2 on the second leg of my trip from Philly out to

Bryn Mawr and then walked from the train station to the Radwyn. That is most definitely how I roll.

David and Abby were here and we all had dinner (Pizza Bagels) and they played with Dad while I mostly caught up on my TV shows from the week - Modern Family, Community, Parks and Rec, The Office. Banged them all out in one evening while stuffing myself with Pumpkin Bread and hot Cranberry Cider. I gave Rick a call to confirm tonight and suggest a place to meet. The Grog. The Groggity Grog. I will make some calls today. I'll call Charles back. And I want to give Endel a call to see how his week was and how that movie turned out.

I was sad to hear that Barry Messere had such a serious injury to his brain falling down the flight of stairs. I am sure that Cheryl, Stephanie and Toby must be worried. Head injuries are always tricky. I should put him on my prayer list along with Bill Evatt. The B to the I to the L to the L.

I am trying not to focus on the worry I have about where I will be working. It feels right to start with temping and that is what I will do. I am going to contact both Core and Decorum on Monday and try to set up appointments. Claire already distributed my resume around Leslie Silver & Assoc. Starting the week, I move into my place I need to carve out time to do writing each night. That will need to be a discipline. My goal should be to have read through all my blogs by then and have my 10-12 essays chosen. Then I can start crafting them one at a time, working on them 6 nights out of 7, for an hour at a time. That seems reasonable. For instance, writing between 9-10 pm. Even when I volunteer, I get back by 9. The only thing that keeps me out past 9 or 9:30 is when I hang out with Claire, and that can easily be the one night that I don't write. Actually, 5 out of 6 nights might be sufficient. I will see and work it out but it is something I need to incorporate into my discipline until it becomes a habit.

It is so quiet in here. I hear the humming of a water heater for a nearby apartment but other than that it is just the clicking of my fingers against this keyboard. I have become so used to the small keys that I wonder if I buy another computer how long it will take me to reacclimate to a standard sized keyboard. This feels perfect in my hands right now. So interesting how the human mind can adapt to just about anything if given the time.

I thought a lot about Grace yesterday. In the Qualification speech at the meeting yesterday morning the woman said something about this program being a spiritual solution. And not then pressuring ourselves to be "it", meaning the solution. It is about community and allowing the process to work. That really spoke to me. Then later in the night, dad and I were talking about immigration reform and the idea of Grace that seems so unpalatable to the populace at large. Speaking of the concept of Grace from the story of the Prodigal Son, dad's reading of that parable is that Grace is given for free, with no expectation of change or redemption.

Looking at the story of Valjean and the kindly Bishop, it is likewise. The Bishop gives Valjean the silver as an act of Grace - and while he hopes it will help Valjean change, he certainly isn't requiring it. But the gift is given nonetheless. It is investing in hope with no guarantee of reward. On the bus I was thinking about the diagram I once made of my outer, middle and inner circles. I can control and have discipline in doing the behaviors in my outer and middle circles. In the case of the healthy outer circle behaviors, I can practice developing the discipline to make those an everyday or regular part of my life. In the case of middle circle behaviors, I can be careful to steer clear of them whenever possible. But to try "get" the first step, I have to realize that I am not in control of whether I act out or not even when I am doing all those great outer circle behaviors like I have been doing recently in my 28-day process. As for the inner circle, I must ask for Grace, and come to believe that my Higher Power will give that to me. All I

must do is wait, be easy on myself, and believe.

The analogy I was mulling over yesterday was getting a package in the mail. When a package is coming in the mail that you know requires a signature, there is nothing you can do to make it come quicker than it already is. You have made the order -- "the ask" -- and you have arranged for someone to be there when it arrives. Then you must wait. You wouldn't beat yourself up if it didn't come on a Tuesday and say, "If I had just done something differently it would be here today. It is my fault." You wouldn't say that because it is not in our control. But if it comes and nobody is there to sign for it, that is your fault. Because you knew it was coming and that is something you were in control of.

I know it is not an airtight analogy. But something about it works for me. It focuses me in on what I can control. And it allows me to fully grasp the powerlessness I have over this addiction. It is a spiritual solution, and that solution is not me it is greater than me. It is the un-namable. The indescribable. What Tolle points to when talking about the first few lines of the Tao Ching. It is the ineffable mystery beyond the capacity of words to describe. That is what will take away the acting out. I must just wait and have the courage to change the things I can. THP will, not mine, will be done.

What draws me back in to wanting to control it is my desire to be with Claire in a committed relationship. I don't want her to have to wait too long. I need to keep releasing that desire, because who is to say that is even the best thing for her or for me? I should give that up to the Higher Power for the greatest good. If that is the solution for my acting out, why wouldn't that be the solution for what is best in terms of how the two of us relate? I just love her so much and enjoy her being a part of my life and think that it would be such a shame for me to receive the Grace of sobriety and not be able to share it with her. But who knows? Maybe that would be for the highest good. I realize I don't know and that I can give that up too. That is technically a defect of character of mine that I still think I know what is best for her. I give that up today and I make a commitment to give that up every morning and release the attachment I have toward a certain relationship with her to the universe.

I just flashed back to a stretch of road from LaGrange, GA to West Point. I am not sure why but I did. I wonder what I should have for breakfast. Maybe I should make some eggs. I haven't done that in a while. Eggs and Toast and scrounge up some fruit. Do my grandpop impression after he made some excuse why he didn't want to go to church. I wonder what his religious views truly were. My alarm is going off so I will have to pick up that thought next time.

Mon, Mar 8

I arrive at the page with my computer on the fritz. I don't know what happened last night but apparently, I got a virus and nothing is working correctly. There is a popping noise that comes up every few seconds, but for now it is letting me type so I am not going to worry about it. I might have to buy my new computer sooner than I thought.

Anyway, I am doing well this morning. I am up at 7:30 and I am well rested, which is always a good sign that I got to bed at a decent. I had a busy day, full of lots of walking and socializing with healthy people. I ran into Carole and Yen walking back from the Borders and then ...

I arrive at the page again for the second time this morning on a second computer. Garth's Dell Mini 9, RIP. July 2009 - March 2010. You gave me good service and you died honorably in the service of computing. I will always remember our times together on the roads of America. You came through when

you had to and died when you weren't needed as much.

Getting back to what I was saying, I ran into Carole and Yen yesterday on their way home from having Indian Food for lunch and we chatted about their trip to Taiwan, how their teaching jobs are going and what I have been up to since finishing my walk.

Before seeing them, I had spent a few hours at Borders, reading the marriage book, editing some blog posts and looking quickly at cookbooks I might want to use when I move into my place. It was a balmy day for late winter, around 50-something degrees and I made the most of it to walk as much as I could. I got home just before mom and dad got back from church and I heated up the one remaining pizza bagel to *monze* on.

I sat around with them in the afternoon. Dad talked to Sheri about the reunion, I read some articles on the internet - most notably a chapter from Michael Lewis' upcoming book on the housing bubble – and I fuffed away the hours until I met Rick at the Grog for dinner. Rick was exactly like he was when I last saw him. Instead of Slick Rick, he is Consistent Rick. We talked about regular stuff, my shotgun incident, his dating life, the upcoming retreat he is going to etc. After dinner (I had a mediocre crab cake sandwich that I unwittingly told him was good when he asked) we parked at the church and took a little walk around to kill some time, coming past the Radwyn and then back up and around and to the meeting room 15 minutes early. I saw a bunch of familiar faces at the meeting - John, Steve, Bob, etc. The more things change, the more I am glad to see a cadre of the same people still engaged in recovery. It is not like the addictive way of thinking ever leaves you, so I will always need the rooms, much like Bobby will always need the dialysis machines.

Ah, the mind. We read the third step last night. It was just the one I needed to hear. What is the balance between GRACE and WILLINGNESS, of WORKING the steps and ALLOWING a spiritual solution to take place? I have been very blessed this past half month or so to be doing my 28 day process and concentrate on DOING things that I know are in my control. It is up to me - simple discipline - to (as I was about to write the next words I had to run to the bathroom mirror to do it because I had forgotten) say my affirmations in the morning and at night, to get at least 30 minutes of walking in each day, to write these morning pages, to have a recovery call or conversation. Yet it isn't just simple discipline to stop acting out. If it was, I would have been able to catch this thing long ago when I was moving phones around Alta Vista or cutting up credit cards and slamming my phone down on the concrete outside of Geneva Global. That is where the spiritual component comes in. I came to believe that a Higher Power could grant me the Grace to not act out. Then I turned my will and my life over to my Higher Power, assured that what fills up my cup will be more positive than the addictive thinking and acting that filled it before.

Last night after the meeting Charles and I went out for coffee. He talked about how in the beginning the slogan One Day At A Time really helped him. Just a day. Just today. All I need to do is surrender to HP and have the willingness to receive Grace today. Then I can concentrate of following through with the outer circle behaviors I have committed to that are in my power and just accept the GIFT of a cessation of those things I couldn't control on my own.

One thing is for sure, my mind tries to insert itself into every problem. That is one of the reasons I feel curiously compelled to investigate careers heavy on service rather than intellectual rigor. My primary learning right now - how to move beyond my addictive experience with sex - is a problem of my mind. It cannot be solved on the same level at which it was created. Of that I am 100% sure. So it becomes a

matter of being led by my heart and getting my mind out of the way so that Grace can be received.

What I can be disciplined about is clear: Doing my 28-day process. Attending meetings. Being of service to others WHENEVER possible. Actively seeking out community with people who are healthy for me to be around. That's it. That's all. Everything else will be a gift ... a gift that I am VERY grateful for.

It looks like I will need to buy a new computer sooner rather than later. What did I learn from my trip? That Rome was not built in a day. But it was built in a succession of days where people did one little thing at a time. I need to give myself doable tasks, much like Dan Fante realized he couldn't write books but he could write a page a day. Today I want to call both Decorum and Core staffing and get an appointment to see them. I want to have a nice dinner with Eldon and Mary. And I want to pick up Claire from the airport and ask her if I can use her place Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday since my computer is down for the count. That's enough for today. So let me get to it.

Wed, Mar 10

I am back to the page, somewhat reluctantly, after two days off. It has been a confusing two days. Yet, I am still alive, still healthy and smiling. It all started on Monday morning at my parents' house when I turned on my computer only to find a virus. Jumping Jehosophat. It was a particularly nasty virus that wouldn't allow me to open anything. After fussing with it for about an hour or so and trying to download some free anti-virus software, I gave up and took a shower.

Wait, I did write morning pages that day. I guess I only missed one day ... yesterday. On Monday my day got a bit more challenging yet when I took the bus back to NYC. I will be perfectly fine if I don't have to take the bus for another year or two. Once again it was packed to the gills. I sat next to a very nice Eastern European woman who asked to borrow my phone. I said, Fuck You Old Lady. Of course I didn't. I let her and she called her daughter in New York. The problem with the bus is that you are at the mercy of traffic and on Monday that included an overturned tractor trailer in the right lane of the NJ turnpike just south of exit 8. It made us an hour and a half late. That meant an extra 90 minutes of me on the bus, annoyed, hungry and seriously *feening* for some interaction - mental or otherwise - with a woman. I ended up emailing Sadjo and she emailed back. But I didn't ask for a massage appointment. I guess that is to my credit. But it seems like a bit of a Phyrrie victory. The effort was still an emotional reaction to my discomfort and neediness.

When I got to the city, I walked up to get a slice of pizza and then continued on to Ray's parking garage where I picked up his car and drove to the East Side. It took me an ETERNITY to get a parking spot. I am not kidding when I say I drove around the UES for a good 35 minutes before settling on a spot at 3rd Ave and 101st. Done and done. I had dinner with Eldon and Mary and then watched some TV, including the YEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAH opening to CSI: Miami and then I left to pick up Claire at LaGuardia Airport.

It was exciting to wait for her at the bottom of the Arrivals escalator with all the taxi and limo drivers. It made me think of Dan Fante and his years as a car service driver while being an alcoholic. I wish sex addiction was as straightforward as alcoholism. I don't mean to demean the experience of alcoholics, but it seems that sexuality is such a central part of who we are that changing that aspect of ourselves is immensely threatening. At least it feels that way for me. But who am I kidding, I'm sure recovering alcoholics feel the same way.

I had decided to not go to the Monday night meeting initially because I wanted to have dinner with Mary & Eldon and wasn't sure I would have another chance to do so later in the week. But honestly, I didn't feel like going either. I had had an ass-full of yearning and neediness and not being able to reach out and get my "meds". Honestly, I would have liked nothing more than for Claire to have come home, taken a shower, let me clean up and then eat her pussy until she came all over my face and fell asleep in my arms. I didn't happen that way, obviously. We came home, hung out and bit and then I held her while she fell asleep. We talked a bit and I voiced some of my frustrations and well, anger. It was anger that night.

I walked back to 1075 Park Avenue at 1:45am feeling very, very angry with the world. Interestingly, I didn't have any desire to talk to anyone in my anger. I just wanted to go to sleep. And that I did. I woke up a bit late the next morning but by chance so did Mary and Eldon so we ate breakfast together. Directly after breakfast I went and retrieved the car which I had left parked at Claire's apartment and drove it back over to Ray's garage. From there I put on my headphones and walked down and over to Claire's office where I picked up her keys. I was planning on going to a meeting at St. Bart's after looking for a Kcup filter for Claire. That proved to be a little harder than I first thought and as I was walking I decided, Fuck it, I am not going to a meeting. Instead, I walked up 3rd Ave, finding a filter finally at Gracious Homes, and then continued up to the Puerto Rican chicken place on 104th.

When I got to Claire's apartment it was about 2pm. I had a quick lunch of chicken, kernel corn and a bunch of water. Then I settled into some DVR - two episodes of Men of a Certain Age and one How I Met Your Mother. I did a little job bank searching on Idealist.org and then cleaned up the kitchen and house before Claire got home. She meditated for an hour and a half and I went to Gourmet Garage to pick up a couple of things for dessert and then took a quick nap on the sofa. Claire made dinner and we ate it watching the National Geographic Photo show and then American Idol. We got to cuddle during American Idol and then RuPaul's Drag Race and it felt so nice to be so close to her and be able to rub her and feel her skin. I am soooooo attracted to her. I would so love to have taken her into the room and ravished her body and then laid there breathing heavily together. I know it wouldn't have solved anything, and it probably would have made things more complicated for her, but that is what I wanted.

This time I decided not to get into bed with her and hold her. Instead, I walked back to my room, got ready for bed and ended up texting Audrey, Susan and Hannah. I hit the jackpot with Hannah, and we had one of our phone masturbation sessions. She is so similar to me in her enjoyment ... indeed her need to get off that it always makes for a nice, fun conversation. After being sober for a few days, though, I will admit that the energy of sharing that kind of conversation with a stranger feels a bit off. But whatever. I read a few lines and then fell asleep. It meant that I woke up late again today.

Now I am here at Borders, about to read up on Podcasting for Dummies and then meet David for lunch. Not exactly sure what I will do this afternoon. Maybe I will do some editing and read some more of podcasting for dummies. Maybe some more sifting through job listings.

I really want to be intentional about cooking when I am in my new apartment, even if that means eating later. I need to come up with good snack food to stave off the appetite. I'm thinking fruits and veggies (carrot sticks, celery) and nuts. Natural shit like that. And I need some Tupperware because if I am by myself, I will have extras and then I can take that for lunch the next day or the next few days.

I think Johnny Cash just came on the Borders music system. Good ole Johnny Cash. My eye just caught the Dean and DeLuca cookbook. I think that would be too advanced for me. I should ask Claire if she

wants to go up to Boston one of the first few weeks in April. I love weekend trips with her, even if I am not getting any. It is interesting how I can be satisfied with closeness with her and then getting off by myself on the phone. Kelli. Hannah. Lisa. Three phone friends. What I really, really, really, really, really, really don't want to do is spend money on this shit. That is a line I still have in the sand. Fuck Lavalife, LLC and all the money they have made off me. I offer all the money I have spent on that medicating to the universe. Really, if I can't find a willing non-line partner, just watch porn and be done with it man. Be done with it.

Breaking Bad Season 3 just started. That means I need to jump on Season 2 out on DVD. That is a fun show. That and Men of a Certain Age have been two great discoveries. Treme premieres in April. I am searching for things to type. I have nothing left to say. I just want to live. To laugh, to sleep, to fuck, to joke, to walk, to sing.

Mon, Mar 15

I arrive at the page in my new apartment. Finally. It is truly amazing to look back and realize how long I have been relying on others for a place to stay. It had been since August 28th that I slept in a place all my own. I noticed it right away. Being by myself and not having anyone else around was surreal after 7 months of being at someone else's house. I need to get this place together - well, the guest room together - so I can start hosting and get some human energy here around me.

I had a nice weekend. On Friday I took the MTA train up to North White Plains and met my parents around 12:30. From there we chugged up to Simsbury to visit Nance and Dennis and clan. When we arrived Morgan and Nancy were home. Morgan was preparing to go to work and Nancy was just coming home from work. Nancy and Mom and I made bread dough for cinnamon buns. Then we relaxed and hung out for a while. I read some of Dad's library book, which happened to be the Taylor Branch tome about his experience helping Clinton record oral history tapes about his presidency when he was in office. Fascinating stuff.

We went to an early dinner at the Iron Frog where Morgan waitresses. They had a bunch of flat screen TVs and on the one directly facing our table Lehigh was playing Lafayette at Stabler Arena for the Patriot League championship. I hadn't even known that they were any good this year, but they ended up winning and are Tournament bound. Not surprisingly, they drew Kansas - the country's number one team - in the first round. Can you say bloodbath? At least they are dancing baby. At least they are dancing.

We shared a nice Argentinian Malbec courtesy of Morgan and I ordered the special - which was a linguine with clams and mussels. It was quite good, although I didn't get to attack it until a few minutes after I arrived because I got all worked up about Claire's gift card to Pure Yoga not working after I went through all that effort to purchase it for her at Christmas time. After dinner we went back to Nancy and Dennis' and we finished preparing the cinnamon bun rolls and baked some cookies and watched a variety of music DVDs and shows. Joss Stone and LeAnn Rimes had a wonderful collaboration on a show called Crossroads on Palladia. I should check to see if I have the channel here. We also watched a song or two of Bon Jovi, including one he sang with the dude from the All American Rejects. Who else? Def Leppard and Taylor Swift. Yawn. Then we saw a DVD of Alicia Keys unplugged. She was quite talented and looked damn good. It has become a Nance and Den tradition to watch some musical performances when we are up there. They didn't disappoint.

On Saturday I slept in because late Friday night I fell into a phone conversation with Susan from Waco that turned into some rather hot and nasty phone sex. She is an interesting one. Once she got into it she had a filthy little mouth on her. Man oh man. I had to steal upstairs while Dennis was sleeping and get some olive oil for me to do the damn thing with. Then in the morning everyone left and I had some time alone and, as luck would have it, Susan was up for round 2. That was a quicker round, however, because I needed to get out the door to meet Nancy and my parents down at the Methodist church and meet Woody, the man who had hooked me up with both James Turberville and Thomas Butts on my walk.

We all had a nice visit after their bible study and then headed home to chill. Nancy and Mom went back to the church after lunch to help with the spaghetti dinner preparations but dad and I stayed at home and were dangerously close to having a nice nap when Morgan breezed in looking for help in preparing for Nance's "surprise" birthday party at Linda's. We couldn't refuse, even though deep down I totally wanted to. We went with her to the grocery store and then to Linda's where we iced the cupcakes while she cut the veggies. We hung out there for a while and then went back home where I finally did get to have a nice nap downstairs. We went to the party around 6:30 and pretty much everyone was already there. It was a nice crowd for the size of the house and it seems like Nance had a nice time. I need to remember to send her a card wishing her happy birthday and saying thanks. Which reminds me that I also need to buy some stamps. I will get those today at the post office down by ABS. Mom and dad and I got a ride home from someone else since Nance and Den and Morgan weren't quite ready to leave yet.

Dad and I stayed up and watched The Ricky Gervais show and had some good laughs at Karl Pilkington's expense. He really does look like a little bald, orange headed twat. But he is unwittingly a great comedian. Then dad hit the hay and I went downstairs and got hooked on a little program called How to Make it in America. I breezed through four half-hour episodes even though it was already late and time was moving forward one hour for daylight savings AND I had church the next day at 9am.

I was able to pull myself off the couch in time and I got ready and we were all dutifully at church for the CAYA service at 9 bells the next morning. It was a nice, unpretentious service with praise music and a sermon entitled Were They Worse Sinners. I grabbed a cup of coffee afterward and Den rushed us home so that we could take off, only making a short pit stop at Melissa and Danny's house on the way out. They had it fixed up pretty nice for us, although I hesitate to imagine what yelling and fights those walls have experienced. I got a chuckle out of the smell of pot upstairs and this porn movie I saw tucked away as we came down the stairs from their attic.

I had driving duties back to NYC and it rained pretty much the whole way. For the second half of the drive I had to pee quite urgently and couldn't find any place to go. That damned Merritt Parkway. Google fucked me by sending me Saw Hill Parkway and into a traffic jam instead of a more direct toll way and we ended up not getting here until about 2:20 pm. Mom and I rushed up here to go to the bathroom while Dad parked. We spent the next few hours squiring my stuff up her from the car and from Claire's before going back there to take her to dinner at El Paso. Well, my half hour is almost up so I will only mention that dinner was tasty, Claire gave me a HJ after making out once my parents left, and then I ran into Nakia on the long commute back to my apartment. Once here I chilled and watched some DVR and talked to Ray on the phone.

I'm getting used to my place but it already feels like home. Today, I will pick up some things at the store and continue to settle in, hanging my pictures, unpacking my stuff, etc. See you tomorrow.

Mon, Mar 22

What do I want to do with my life? Ah, talk about big questions that have been unanswerable for a long time. That one tops the list. I am standing here at a crossroads in my life, 15 years of administrative work behind me, likely 30 years of an unknown professional career ahead. I can do anything I want and yet I am here, in statis, because I am constantly second guessing what it is I want to do. To do something completely different would require another leap of faith - a bigger leap of faith in fact than I took on my walk. I am scared. I am scared that if I jumped the universe wouldn't be there to catch me. I am scared that I wouldn't have enough money to keep this place. I am scared that I would fail at doing what I want.

Last week I gave myself the luxury of not doing a job search each day so that I could get the apartment together and ready to host. That mission has been accomplished. Now I need to start looking around and ask myself the question, "how do I want to be spending my days". I need to channel Demetri Martin. He asked, "what is it I like to do". Then he asked, How Can I Make Money Doing That? The universe supports bold actions which come from a soulful place. Yet I feel as though I haven't gotten in touch with that soulful calling. Am I fooling myself when I think that if I did have a clear picture of what I would like to do, I would go for it? Would I have years where I would struggle? Could I keep my eyes on the prize in that situation? If I just knew. If I just knew. Should I go back to school? Should I take another administrative job? What is going to get me out of bed every morning for the next 30 years? I do not need to settle. I have been settling up until last August and it didn't serve me. Taking a chance is what brought so many blessings into my life. The lesson couldn't be any clearer and yet I sit here, hesitating.

What is it that I enjoy doing? I enjoy watching good television and movies - stories that resonate with what I have experienced to be true in life. I enjoy walking. I enjoy talking to people about their lives, asking probing questions and listening in a non-judgmental fashion. I enjoy hosting people. I enjoy designing books and videos where I meld text with images and music to tell a story. I enjoy travel by car and by foot. I enjoy helping people when I can.

Acceptance. Be Who I Am. Who am I? I'm Studs Terkel for a modern generation. I am the guy who talks to everyday people and gives them a voice. There is romance the way people like to imagine it, and then romance and sexual expression the way it is. I see a gap in understanding as large as it was in Dr. Kinsey's day. I should start to read up on all the research that spans sexuality, relationship studies and see what is out there.

***No entries Mar 23 – May 3**

Tuesday, May 4th

This is day 13 of the rest of my life. I am ankles deep in the "getting sober" phase, which from what I hear is the hardest phase of all. Compared to my walk, this would have been the day I arrived in Ossining and then took the ferry across to meet Steve in Pomona. It was the opening Thursday night of the NFL season. We went out and got pizza and then I went to bed early. Tonight, I have a softball game. Who knows, maybe I will get pizza afterward and go to be early. I feel tired enough.

I slept at Claire's last night and didn't get a ton of sleep. I was feeling quite restless and triggered last night after the sun went down. I had eaten and was waiting for the French family when Andrea called from Texas. I didn't recognize the number but I answered. I probably shouldn't have. Anyway, we only talked briefly because the French family came and immediately took over the energy of the house with

their three cute kids. After talking to them for a while I felt like I had to get away. I took off into the night even though Clarie wasn't home yet. She was at Tiny Thai with the girls. I took the subway to 96th, then the bus over to the other side of the park. I walked from the Starbucks over to sit on the benches across the street from Gourmet Garage for a while. Then, chased away by a rat, I went to CVS, bought some Swedish fish and then walked around some more before finally settling near the top of the hill at 102nd and Lex waiting for Claire to get off the train. Since Friday, we have spent three of the last four nights together. I wish it was every night. Even though I can't be sexual for a while, I love just being close to her, talking to her as she goes asleep, smelling her body.

Finding out on Saturday night that she has casually dated Rob on and off for about six months and has recently had sex with him a few times sent me for a loop. Without any acting out to cushion the blow, it forced me to feel a wave of uncomfortable emotions the likes of which I haven't had to sit with ever. In my anger and jealousy and sadness it didn't take me long to realize that part of the reason it was so painful was that my actions had caused the same feelings and worse for Claire back when we were dating. Even now when the thought comes up it is a jolt of pain and a fear of loss, even though she explained that she is not going to continue dating him because they just don't hit it off in the way she would like to with a partner. Yet still, she will be dating. And I won't be. Exactly the inverse of what was happening after we broke up in 2006 during my first two years in the city. Well, not completely true. She was dating but not having sex. I was doing both, although never with an eye to finding a long-term relationship. When it comes to the possibility of that, I always only had a heart for Claire. Still do.

I am using all the tools Tim has suggested I use to position myself for God's grace and the recovery available through it. The days at times can feel excruciatingly slow. I wish I could fast forward through this painful phase of getting sober and relearning different pathways of reaction to the uncomfortable feelings that pop up. I need to get an accountability partner for my web browsing. I signed up for an ATT service that lets me block numbers from calling my phone. X3Watch might be a free accountability software I could use with Claire and with a sponsor.

Happily, my early afternoon tiredness has seemed to have lifted. Tiredness can be a major trigger. Always get enough rest Garth. So, here is my schedule for tomorrow. Up at 7:30. Out the door to run by 8am. Finish exercise by 9. Eat and shower and compose thoughts 9-10. Apply to two jobs 10-11. Phone interview 11-12.

Thu, May 6 (1:09 AM)

Subject: Emergency

Email to my therapist

Tim,

I am still sober but I am just feeling so much. I had a very painful call with Claire just now where I disclosed something that happened within the past two years that I had been dishonest with her about for a long time and hearing her pain just obliterated me. There are just too many feelings coming up of anger and shame for what I have done to the only person I have ever loved. We both agree that she needs some space, but I am just a ball of tears. Right now, I can't imagine staying here in the city and working the program and knowing I can't see her. I want to go to Keystone. I can get my hands on the money to do it.

I have only two questions: Do you think it is a good thing for me to do? And if so, how soon can you get

me in there? I feel like I need professional help daily for an extended period of time to help me work through these uncomfortable feelings without acting out.

If you want me to come in sooner than Friday at 3pm just let me know. But if that is the soonest you can see me, I can stay sober until then. I will use the meetings and the phone numbers of other people in the program until that time. The only thing I have to do tomorrow is go to an interview at 11. It is a moot point now, but someone set the interview who I really value and I can't back out on them at this late hour.

Thank you so much for believing in me. You telling me that you saw a recovery in my spirit during the first meeting was important to me. And even though I feel like I can't take any more pain I am going to take it. I am not going to act out. It has caused me too much pain. It has taken away from me the person I care most for in the whole world. How can it be this cruel? It has brought me to my fucking knees.

-Garth

Saturday night, May 8th

This is my last night in Nueva York before heading back to PA for inpatient treatment. I am really scared and lonely. I don't know what to expect. I know I have the full support of my friends and my parents, but it is Claire who I think about the most. I miss her seemingly 60 times a day. And I wonder what is in her heart right now. Is she angry at me? Does she wish she never met me again almost five years ago? It kills me to think of her regretting the friendship we have had, even as I acknowledge that I have never — up until now — been able to be honest with her about the extent of my sexual activity.

I don't know what it will be like not seeing her or talking to her or getting an email from her for at least 30 days. In fact, that thought is considerably scarier than the thought of not acting out for that same period of time. I have asked and will continue to ask, for Grace to keep me sober. I can't stay sober on my own. But it is harder to give up what Claire and I had — as complicated and ultimately as unhealthy as it was for her —, to God and say "I am fine with whatever happens." And yet that is what I have to do. Oh Claire, how I wish I was the man you hoped I was. And how much I pray that I am that man now even though too much damage has been done by me to you for you to ever experience me that way. I feel a deep, deep hole that I wonder if will ever be filled.

Sunday night, May 9th.

I watched *Away From Her* tonight and felt, maybe for the first time, what a heart-wrenching movie can feel like to the sober heart. Every word, every glance, every nuance spilled over me in waves.

"The desires of the heart are as crooked as crookedness,
Not to be born is the best for man; The second best is
a formal order, The dance's pattern; dance ^{while} you can
- W. H. Auden

Some part of me needed to watch that movie tonight before going to Keystone. I needed to feel both my love and the hurt anew and sit with it. At one point Olympia Dukakis says "I was just thinking that you never know how things are going to turn out." I found that appropriate, especially on this of all nights. Of one thing I can be certain. Those who know me the best and love me all think my going to inpatient therapy is a good decision. As much as my mind and my broken heart want to make this about Claire, I know it is most essentially about self forgiveness and finding my own dignity again. The external relationships I form - from the most important down to the passing acquaintance - are all just reflections of the relationship I have with myself.

There are so many memorable lines in that film, but maybe my favorite is when the nurse tells him about the church billboard: "It's never too late to become what you might have been." Indeed. And as Julie Christie's character Fiona says in the beginning, "All we can hope for in this situation is a little grace." Amen to that.

Monday night, May 10

This is my first night at Keystone ECU. I have to admit, the day passed pretty quickly, but the spectre of 29 more of these laid out in front of me feels pretty daunting. A lot of today was spent listening. After my intake with Kyle when I did a lot of talking I listened through an excruciatingly boring HERE and NOW session and then throughout the entire NIA meeting in Chester.

As the day went on I did manage to carve out time to talk to each of the other community members. I am particularly comfortable with Robert, Doug and NY Eric, although he is leaving on Wednesday. Phil is cool as well - I'll have to make a point to talk to him about his story a little bit.

A couple times today I felt my willingness to be here just evaporate and start into some ideation about getting out and binging on past behaviors. Those feelings, luckily, didn't persist and I made a conscious effort to be a part of the community downstairs until 10:45. That is what this experience is about - the community lifting each other up with their experience, strength and love. For me, what will be most important is acceptance of what is with Claire and building all future relationships on a foundation of honesty. I can only do that while I keep working the steps, going to meetings, etc. I don't know what God has in store for my sobriety. I am can promise to keep coming back. That sounds schmatzic. Meanwhile, I am really lonely and I miss Claire. I wish I could hear her tell me everything will be okay.

GOODNIGHT JUNET & JOYCE

Tuesday night, May 11

If I would have written this an hour ago, it would have been more upbeat and optimistic. But first things first, Grace kept me sober today and sobriety kept me honest and I turn in to bed being able to say Garth, I love you. But in the past hour some old feelings have come on hot and heavy, trying to pull me back into guilt and shame. Neither of those are healthy. Acceptance, responsibility, yes. Shame and guilt. I don't need that burden.

What specifically has me feeling sad, lonely and needy is the thought that Claire and I will never get to be sexual together again. I make up that as being the gospel truth and it makes me tremendously sad. I enjoy so much about her sexually, even though in the past ~~our~~ the frequency and timing of our sexual desires have clashed. I have never, ever enjoyed seeing or helping a woman have an orgasm as much as I enjoy sharing that with Claire. The way she sounds, the way she tastes, the way her eyes will back, the way I love when she curls up against me after her climax and falls asleep. What if I never experience that with her again? What if I never get to sleep next to her and kiss her shoulder?

Yet if it is not for our Highest Good - if it will contain more pain than happiness for us down the line, why do I want that. If I love myself and if I love her, I want what is best. And today I accept that I don't know what is best for Claire.

What is best for me is continuing to get sober: healthy actions over time + Grace. Simple. Recovery is an inside job and Claire's timelines and insecurities aren't helpful to my recovery right now

G (around Anna) Good evening Martha & Yang.

Wednesday night, May 12

Whoa Nellie. I am afraid to get really honest write now because of what might come out. My addict is talking to me really loud in my ear. Really fucking loud. It is saying, "Garth think of how much fun you could have with that 12,000 left of your treatment. You could get a massage every other day for 200 days - that is more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of a year." Trust me, if all I had to do was walk down and say I'm leaving and I would get the refund I would do it right fucking now. I've already lost Claire so what is the fucking point? How can I maintain my willingness when she is out of the picture?

For the first year I was back in PA I was an addict - a 31 year old addict - with no Claire to act as a balast against my full tilt addiction. What did I do that year? I called phone lines. I went out on late night meetings. I met and dated chicks from phone and computer. I dated Arielle. Shit, I forgot that I had cum inside of her and then she took the morning after pill and felt like shit. I met her the night after I dated out with the woman in SW and then she saw me and A in Old City and they exchanged some words. I did some risky shit that year and it was FUN! I had Alisha to talk to, I met Alisha in DC. I know I was searching for something more, but outside of a relationship and outside of financial consequences - I hate to say this, but it was manageable. Not easily manageable, but manageable nonetheless.

I want to leave Keystone AMA but would HATE all the uncomfortable conversations and the sadness of mom and dad. I'm gonna sleep on it. Goodnight Cathy & Peter.

Friday eve, May 14

I didn't get a chance to journal last night because I was so tired. A group of us stayed up to watch the end of the Celtics v Cavs game that sent LeBron back home to Cleveland empty handed once again. I met with the doctor yesterday and after discussing my anxiety he put me on Remeron. I am not sure whether that made me extra sleepy or if I was just exhausted from a day of psychodrama and life histories. Either way, I knocked out like a light.

I am very grateful that the first night is the only instance in which I had problems sleeping. That has allowed me to be rested and present for the many different processes we experience every day. Before I forget I want to mention that Dr. Glacken encouraged me to pursue training in addiction therapy, letting me know that the most successful counselors across the street were the ones who are recovering addicts. I guess that is one of the reasons former athletes often become TV commentators - they know how the game is played from having participated themselves and can provide a perspective the layman can not. I have been hesitant to state it as a clear goal, but no longer. I want to become a clinical social worker who works helping sex addicts.

I need to remember to ask Kyle about his personal opinion about my job situation. Namely, should I ask Simon for a job? I'll do that Monday. Right now I am sitting on the porch on a warm spring evening - I feel calm, curious and a bit anxious. My goal tonight is to enjoy being back at the Friday night SLAA group. Garth, your new life will be more authentic than the old one.

Goodnight Angelo, Gabe, Caleb, Jonah

Saturday eve, May 15

I am waiting to load up in the van for an AA meeting in Media and I had a few minutes to journal. Saturdays have a different rhythm here at Keystone. Late starts, less intense groups, more community interaction. I started the day with a run and have spent some of my other free time alternating between eating (which I do a lot in here), playing pong, throwing firestones, and working on my life history. We had spiritual cleaning today and I stupidly picked the most work intensive task. Live and learn.

Last night I had a very odd sexual dream about Claire. At one point me, her, her mom and Alfred were all there and I was interacting with Claire and Claire with her mother - both in a sexual way. I remember it being quite an exciting feeling, like when I am about to act out in a particularly enjoyable bottom line. I have no idea what it means. Some of the most bizarre dream experiences came to the addict going through withdrawal. Starting from today - day 24 - this is all new territory for me. I have never been sober from all masturbation, pornography and phone sex for this long in my entire adult life.

As both my body and my thinking becomes more sober, I see my relationship with Elaine in much clearer terms. I was right to give her space. I will see if my family therapist recommends asking her for a cost letter. I'm very open to that because I want to do whatever it takes to fully own the pain I caused her by my dishonesty and move forward to make amends and forgive myself. It will be interesting to see if she sends one in if asked.

We are back from my first AA meeting. It's dark out. I'm sitting at a table surrounded by my community. I feel safe and in the right place.

Goodnight Julie and Robert

Sunday, May 16th

I am tired so I know I am entering into dangerous thinking patterns. I am starting to idealize past acting out behaviors and fantasize about new ones to do when I get out of here. That means it is DEFINITELY time to go to bed. Luckily I have had Randall and Robert here to talk through it with me. Come to think of it, I shouldn't have been writing my life history so late at night. Anyway, it is useless to wonder about when or if I will act out in the future because I resigned from the chair of the resisters committee effective this evening. As the newly minted member of the effort committee, my only job is to go upstairs, brush/floss/wash and then fall asleep. Tomorrow is another day.

Memory Qs: Rationalizations; Themes workshop; Convo w/ Scott re: HP; Longwood Gardens; Rick @ Bryn Mawr meeting; Randall's last night.

Goodnight Ann, Jack!

Wednesday, May 19

Ground control to major Tom. I can't get that out of my head. The days are starting to go by quicker now. Tomorrow I will be past the 10 day mark and off phone restriction. I got a shocking card from mom today telling me that Aaron is with them at the Radwyn. Honestly, I don't know what to think. I am not going to worry about it and just focus on my recovery. I will call tomorrow night and chat with him for a bit. I wonder what he thinks about me spending \$13,800 to go to this inpatient center. Apparently he doesn't have an ID. If he applies for one I am wondering whether or not he will get caught up in the identity theft trap. I doubt it. Either way, I am not his caretaker. His actions have consequences, just like mine have.

It's been an interesting few days since Sunday. Randall graduated, Wallace, Nick & Brad arrived, Art has been blocking a full disclosure of his attraction and use of child pornography and today I read my life history to the group. I had a rainy run of Tuesday with Doug & Eric, followed by calisthenics in the parking lot. We had a great session with Bernie on Tuesday afternoon, bookending the session with Harry Chapin songs. I need to download the closing one, as well as Angel by Sarah M.

Community. Community. Community. When I get out my number one task is to create a phone support community of at least 15 people as well as a community of 8-10 guys I connect with at meetings and sometimes after (who will also be on phone list). Along with Tim and a sponsor, that will be my beloved community. Me and another person is a power greater than myself. I need always remember that because I my disease is stronger than me.

Goodnight Dale, Eileen, Udo, Janice, Amy and Kimi et al!

Thursday, May 20

This is a holy place, surrounded by amazing grace. I have seen the power of the community to heal - or at least start that process - today in the life of Art 2. He is so deeply wounded from his childhood and he has revisited some of his traumas on infants and other people he thought would never know. He was simply looking for the love and acceptance he always craved and never received at home. It is a tragic story really. But unlike a Greek tragedy he has a hope of redemption and a higher power pushing him inexorably in that direction. I am but a benevolent witness, as well as one part of the community who is caring for him until he can care for himself.

It's now 10:15 and we just heard from a friend of Randall's that he is in prison. Supposedly it looks they have bumped it to Federal Charges. I feel so sorrowful. It makes me sad and it triggers me at the same time. It makes me feel like I want to just go to sleep and forget about it all. I must be tired because I feel waning hope tonight. I am losing sight of the Promises I hear every night at 12-step meetings.

This is what is getting me through: I know I can't silence the divine part of me that yearns for authenticity and honesty and a life lived in the open. I likewise know that I can't silence the diseased thinking that will always crop up from time to time because of my emotional history. But the divine is now stronger than the addiction, so no matter how dark it feels at times, I just need to close my eyes, let my body go slack and let the current take me where I need to go.
Mem Q: Art's PRN, Walk w/ Doug, 30 Rock Finale, Phone call w/ Mom & Aaron.

Goodnight Ngozi.

Saturday, May 22

What a day, what a day. Doug's gone. Back to Kansas and then to CO and to the long, hard work of repairing a marriage with Amy. Best grace be with you my friend. A lot has happened over the last 48 hours. On Friday I met with Kyle and he told me that Claire would be sending in a cost letter and that she was "very angry." My heart sunk. It was like a punch in the gut to hear that someone you love is in pain... and that pain is because of you. That conversation has me future tripping quite a bit to the day a week from Wednesday when I hear it read to me. Robert will be gone, so I think I will ask Phil to read it. Shift. Why does life have to teach me lessons this way? Is this really the only way I could have learned - but getting into a relationship with someone I wanted to love and respect with every fiber of my conscious mind and then witnessing myself wound her time and time again in the exact same place of her heart that had been ripped open before. Really addiction? Really?!!

Today I played wiffle ball and ended the game on a unassisted triple play. Then we went to the AA meeting and I was so bored that I started to have intense mental lapses about winning the lottery and being able to act out as often as I want. The fantasy was to have a massage table in my apartment when I could lay down and call either the phone line or a phone sex partner. A masseuse would come in quietly as I talked, walk in front of me with black tights and a blouse and disrobe down to a pair of black panties and a bra. Then she would walk over and start massaging me on my back. When she sensed the conversation getting sexual she would just flip me over and stroke me, working with the conversation to make me cum when I was hearing the other woman cum. Good damn that sounds good right now.

Goodnight Crystal, Eric, Sahmah & James!

Sunday, May 23

Another day down and I suddenly fear that I am in grind it out mode. Everyday is different but that is certainly how I feel right now. My willingness to get sober is low. I am also toying with the idea that I can manage this disease, as long as I have a job and no girlfriend. But I still feel committed to THIS program and to this internal walk to New Orleans which would allow me to experience life from the vantage point of someone who has been sober for 120 days - 4 months.

Today was a pretty fun day overall - with some mini golf and my first ever game of risk. But I got bugged down and a bit glum at the Bryn Mawr meeting for some reason and started thinking about how sexually restrictive it felt to be in this program. In a different way it puts me in relation to my sexuality much the same way as my parents teaching on the subject did. And that, for me, is an uncomfortable place to be.

Can I not be sober and still enjoy life, live honestly and achieve some balance in my life? It is doubtful, but my mind still plays with that idea. For today all I have to think about is continuing to put my effort into this program and practice honesty at every chance I get. I know 100% that being here and giving Claire space and looking at my consequences with a sober mind and working on emotional/family of origin issues is what I am meant to be doing RIGHT NOW. The next step will be getting a job and building a recovery community to get me through the next 60 odd days. One step at a time. All the sexual things I feel deprived of right now - they aren't going anywhere. I can always try them in September. Tomorrow, my assignment on perfectionism awaits. Q's: Art share, Hole in 1s, Rites, PCI, Risk Goodnight Colleen & kooky small group!

Monday, May 24

Another Monday, another visit to the Chester Salvation Army homegroup of NA or, as Phil calls it, wisdom from the mumbling insane. As entertaining as that meeting is and was, the highlight of my day had to be my 20-minute morning meditation on the porch from 7:30-7:50. It was so nice to sit there and feel the cool breeze and chant my tones and know that 120 miles away Claire was chanting that same mantra. I can't be with her physically and I can't communicate with her right now but I can commune with her spiritually every morning. In that realm I deepest, truest selves can dance together and be one and that is beautiful to me.

I snapped out of a 2-day funk after talking to Kyle around lunch. In talking about Claire he expanded on the conversation they had and said that she had expressed that she still loves me. What made break down in tears was that she had also told him that she couldn't have gotten through her mother's sickness and death without my support. That felt so good to hear. We also talked about my relationship with my mum and our shared characteristics - but divergent coping mechanisms. I need to shed the overwhelming weight of the perfectionism and trying to control other people's feelings by being this never ending "pleaser." It has set up this dichotomy in my life where I am super boyfriend or super son or super employee on one side and then sex addict on the other. That is not sustainable and it doesn't support a life of emotional honesty that has to undergird any long term relationship.

Today I had to write with my right hand, say no to people and wear mismatched clothes. It definitely made me more focused and present in my tasks and was a good ping pong challenge. Q's: Eric psychodrama, Phil/Wallace Here and Now, Hope at NA, Dany call, Pizza Party. Goodnight Saby & Amelia!

Tuesday, May 25

Tuesdays are about embracing the suck. The day started out okay but by the evening my emotional state quickly went south. I was finishing up my victims list before getting in the van to go to the SLAA mtg. I might be feeling some resentment because deep down I don't consider some of those people on the list victims. Oh well, I will receive any feedback on it tomorrow with an open mind.

In the van I was getting so annoyed with Art. N. He pisses me off because he is not being honest and then trying to camouflage his unwillingness to commit to honesty with hokey humor. Part of me feels like telling him off.

The SLAA mtg was late and boring, except for Robert's impassioned share. I finished my victims list after goodnight group and came straight to the room. I am tired as fuck. My willingness right now is at 8. Only reason I can see right now to stay sober for a while longer is to focus on getting a job. Unless a miracle happens. I'll keep praying. In the meantime, I am sober today, so that is one piece of Good News.

Q's: 30 min meditation, how much \$ spent on addictions, Robert at SLAA



Goodnight Anita & Howie!

Wednesday, May 26

Claire's cost letter was read to me this morning in our group session. It cut me to the core. I don't know how to adequately describe the kind of feeling I got from having to hear that my actions were the biggest nightmare with a man Claire has ever experienced. THAT is what my addict has wrought. That is a consequence that will never leave me and the memory of it will follow me for the rest of my days.

I feel a lot of anger and resentment toward Marilyn. Fuck her. I never want to see her or speak with her ever again. I never cared about her - I just liked that she was freaky in bed - and she knew that! She knew all along that I cared about Claire and not her, but I guess she was following her own karma. My lessons are my lessons. I can no longer say my life hasn't touched deep pain. This disease, how I have hurt others, when it has left me yeah, I know pain.

Practically, the letter was clear. I can't contact her or see her. I have to completely let her go and grieve. I have touched her life and brought some joy, but more pain - She touched mine and gave me a glimpse of what love might be for me one day, if I am healthy. But words don't matter anymore. They have fallen out of my mouth over the past five years and have created nothing of value. All that is left is action and to give my love for Claire up to God.

Q's: Phil cost letter/Jon comment, Scott "emotionally corrective exp.", Wii Golf, ^{if I can live through this feeling, I can live through anything}

It is now 10:10 and my spirit has lifted considerably. I met with Kyle, ^{interacted} my with the community, played some pong, spoke honestly, read some Joan B. and took a nice shower. The healthy guilt and pain and sadness and loneliness are still there, but they don't feel overwhelming. They are feelings reminding me that the path is in surrender. Oh, and I talked to Nan too. All in all, a day I will never forget. Sept 16. May 26. Let honesty be my guide. Claire, I will always love you. Garth, I forgive you. Goodnight my dear Claire!

Thursday, May 27

Lakers win, Lakers win. Nick and I just had a nice long talk before bed. I turned tonight and it cooled off. The windows next to me are open and a breeze is coming in. I experienced a lot of happiness and joy today. Community. That is a big part of it. We isolate ourselves from the world and wonder why we can't climb out of our shit. I need to build a new community in New York.

Q's: Ping-pong mind wbin, Phil psychodrama, Nick's Bad Life Stories, Artest put back, Paul on picnic bench.

Remember, mornings are better than nights. So hold off any important and consequential decisions to the morning. In the meantime, just breathe. I won't die.

Goodnight Claire. For the last time.

Friday, May 28th

Friday morning Grief and Loss. This is my favorite group and today was no exception. Jen's group had its share of aha moments. In the first part I talked about learning resilience and love from Dick White and imagined that Ende might have taken inspiration from seeing me face my shadow. In the second part of group Scott shared a lost letter to his dad and then we sat and talked to his dad in an empty chair. When I went up then I pictured myself talking to Aaron and said what came to my heart - that the past is the past, we can't change that, but I know you love your son and he loves you, so push past all your personal shame and embarrassment and let him know that you love him and are thinking of him. The third part of the group was an exercise that led to us seeing our shadow, but I sensed the direction of the assignment and jumped the gun. Jen told us to write about someone we didn't like and to identify WHY we didn't like them. I chose Simon and as I was writing it out I realized all the things I didn't like about him were attributes of myself I hadn't accepted and owned. It was an AHA moment and something Marilyn said to me long ago came to mind - something along the lines of I will never get better or grow unless I acknowledge my shadow. I did that today. I worry too much about appearance; I crave adoration and praise; I don't practice what I preach; I skillfully manipulate people; I am not honest. That is my shadow and my addict feeds off me denying that part of myself. No longer. I can own my shortcomings and humbly ask my H.P. to transmute them by spirit and then tell myself it is okay to let it go.

Goodnight John & Pam & kids

Saturday, May 29

Sitting here with Loring, Brad, Art, Eric and Nick watching game 6 of West Coast finals. My mind goes back to May 2004 when I was at Ben and Shari's farm, just months after first realizing I was an addict. I was so alone. Nobody knew. I had no community. It was just me and my mind and my uncomfortable emotions. No wonder I didn't have a chance. I remember the feeling of withdrawal. I kept fantasizing about calling the line and seeing Jessica again. We had seen Shrek just before I left and had great sex. I wonder what her life story would sound like if she had a chance to tell it in the Keystone community room. Everyone deserves to be heard and valued as a complete person - not just a sexual object.

Six years later I am watching playoff basketball, surrounded by a community. Was that always the key? To break down the walls of isolation and talk and make friends with people who will listen and support? I believe it is. My dad has always been fascinated by community. I lived it in SW Philly and now am doing the same at Keystone. Now the challenge is to create a new community of support in NYC that doesn't include Claire. Ah, Claire. Each morning I send you the Light and trust that God is taking care of you better than I did. I am forgiving myself and hopefully you can forgive me. That, however, is not in my control. I can not control your happiness or sadness. For now we can only meet in the spiritual realm. Speaking of which I did some reading on Love Addiction today. I don't believe I am one. If anything Claire has the core emotional background of a Love Addict and I the love avoidant with the "wall" to intimacy that she was drawn to. Yet it is more complicated since both of us has done a lot of inner work. It will be interesting to talk to Kelly and Kyle. And to see if Claire contacts me. Memory Qi: Call w Dad/Dick Waite, laughing @ AA mts, boundaries

Goodnight Johnnie & Martha!

Sunday, May 30

Dick Waite died this afternoon and it is dawning on me that I probably won't get to go to his funeral. I really feel regretful that I might not get to be there to celebrate his life and be there for Ann, Rick, Steve and Heidi. If it turns out that I can't go I will want to write a card to Margaret and each of the kids. Phil is probably right - Dick would want me to finish the program and be the healthiest person I could be. He would want me to build an authentic life and carry on his spirit to those I interact with. I hope that the family still gets together on the 4th of July.

I have had to battle through a lot of resistance this afternoon and evening about not going to the funeral. But I am gradually coming around to the realization that my HP wants me to stay here - that is when the FLOW is. UGH. I hate it when other people (Rick, Phil) are right and my first impression is wrong. I guess the gift of this program is that I stick around and listen and don't run away. I can feel anger or resentment or sadness or loneliness and not react instinctively.

Today we went to Fort Mifflin and I was bored out of my skull.

Robert, Brad, Scott and I left the fort early and sat at the picnic tables and shot the shit for a while.

Today was the equivalent day of my run-in with bed bugs at the Johnson Motel in Opal, VA. That night sucked. Dick's death and my desire to leave early was certainly a potential stumbling block. But tomorrow I will wake up (not itching) and I will run and meditate and journal and BE PRESENT and continue on to New Orleans. It seemed so far away that night. It feels so far away tonight.

Goodnight bed-bugs!

Monday, May 31

The last day of May comes to a close and holy shit, what a month. May 2010 will forever be remembered as the month I was first sober for every single day. Also, the month I went to Keystone and the month Dick Waite died. If I had to give a State of My Life speech at this month I would say that the number one lesson of this month has been I can face uncomfortable emotions: guilt, loneliness, sadness — and not have to run away or dull myself with sexual adventures. I can be honest and open and willing and when I am sober I find time to exercise, meditate and write. Who would have thunk it?

June will open with a trip up to Hebron to celebrate Dick's life. He will never be forgotten — his spirit, his laughter, the way he always loved me unconditionally. I wonder how Margaret is taking it, if she is yet allowing herself to grieve fully with all the kids and family around. She lost her friend and soulmate, her travel partner and walking mate. There must be an emptiness there far greater than what I feel giving up those behaviors of 16 years or the pain Claire feels from my dishonesty. I did think of Claire today, wanting to share with her the news about Dick and Aaron and be comforted by that. And yet I can't, I must grieve what was, that comfortable formless force that wasn't leading either of us where we wanted to go.

Today was a relaxed Memorial Day at Keystone: Psychodrama-life and Here and Now life. I learned a great lesson — ask clearly for what I want and then trust in God to lead me in the right direction. I guess Hebron is when I am meant to be on Wednesday at 11am. As for tonight I am here — and in Culpeper in spirit. I'll wake up tomorrow and keep walking.

Goodnight Nancy!

Tuesday, June 1st

Dateline West Hebron at Mary Emma's house. I just got in from standing under a sky fully illuminated with stars. It kind of puts things in perspective. I am significantly insignificant. It has been sort of a surreal day. I woke up at Keystone and spent a half day in that world and then spent the second half in the outside world with the Waiter in Hebron. I'll never forget seeing Rick's eyes well up with tears when we got to him in the receiving line at the funeral home. We had arrived late and were the last ones in line, God works in mysterious ways. Speaking of mystery and awe I have to say the closest thing to a miracle that I have ever experienced is Aaron getting to see Dick one week before he died. Three weeks ago the thought of that week was unlikely as me winning the Mega Millions. It reminds me that we can think we know the future but we never do. We have to live one day at a time.

As they would say in NA, today was a good day because I didn't use. That meant that I got a good night's sleep, I exercised, I meditated, I was PRESENT with my emotions and I was honest and open in spending time with others. That is a Promise fulfilled. I got an idea today to write a contrary Promises of the Addiction to frame jointly with the AA promises which I love reading so much. It would be my screwtape letter so to speak. It would remind me that along with the "excitement" of the planning and the act, addiction is a package deal and the other part of that package is spiritual death, laziness, no ambition and a lack of natural creativity — not to mention an inability to be completely honest.

One last thing. Standing under the stars I really missed Claire. This addiction cost me plenty, but nothing near as valuable as her trust and respect. How I would like to be sharing this with her, and have her meet Aaron and fall asleep next to me. Dear Claire, may the Light of the Most High guide and keep you better than I.

Mean Qs: Anna looking like Heidi, Kay's living man, Shadow game, Bunker Hill w/ Rick Goodnight Art and Ann!

Wednesday, June 2

I am back from Hebron and on my plastic bed. Nick and I have a new roommate Justin from Texas. I got back tonight at 9:20pm after a long and emotionally exhausting day. It started at Tam with a run around Berkeley's Lake and ended just now with me finishing off my Powerlessness/Unmanageability Index for Paul. In between I said farewell to Dick, saw tons of old Hebronites and Salemites and had some great in depth talks with my folks. I missed Claire at the funeral. Reliving the tale of Dick & Margarita's love it hit me especially hard of what I have lost by my actions. I lost the chance to have what they had with Claire. Sitting there exactly one week to the MINUTE after hearing her cost letter it made me feel so sad and humble. What does the Light of the Most High have in store for my life? I don't know but right now my heart feels heavy. I forgive myself, but I need to continue to mourn. Maybe one day I won't miss her so much. But for now I am going to sleep, looking forward to chanting with her in the morning.

Q's: Cherry Pie, Heidi Am Song, Dad's Steve checking up, Mom reading card, Doug, Heidi thanking kitchen group, Rick's Austins, Convo in car about Abby.

Goodnight Fitz and Lee!

Thursday, June 3

I am beginning to hate nights. How can I be so peaceful and spiritually connected in the mornings and so jittery and anxious at night? Robert and Doug just called in quick succession and it was really uplifting to hear their voices and know they are doing well. Their phone calls hopefully snapped me out of my mini-self pity party. I can get into a place of gratitude for all that I have been learning about myself.

I started off the day in the typical fashion - run, meditate, eat, group. Then the day got a little fractured. Tim's life story and then I was taken out of the group when Eric's cost letter was read so that I could do 1st step with Paul. When I came back into group all hell broke loose. Mary and Wallace had it out about Wallace taking his attorney's advice to not move forward with full disclosure. Words were exchanged. Voices were raised. Accusations were hurled. But pretty much from the beginning I saw the writing in the sand. Wallace won't budge and neither will Mary. He will be gone sometime in the next three days.

The community was a little shellshocked after that session. Things have calmed down a bit now as we watch the Lakers game. I don't know if I can make it through the end of this game. I'm fading fast plus I would prefer to get a full 8 hours so I can run refreshed in the morning. I'll probably call it a night after the third quarter.

I've been battling with a lot of euphone recall tonight, especially with past mutual masturbation experiences with women. I miss them. I guess that's okay. I am still grieving my addiction. But today is Thursday and it was an honest day because I didn't act out.

Goodnight David & Cavalier fans!

Friday, June 4th

I've been so many places in my life and times
I've sung a lot of songs
I've made some bad rhymes
I've acted out my life in stages, with 10,000 people watching
But we're alone now and I'm singing this song for you.

I relate to that lyric, sung most memorably for me by the late great Donny Hathaway. I can't categorize my life as black or white, good or bad. I've made a lot of choices - some that have brought joy to myself and others. But I've also made choices that caused others harm and brought feels of guilt and embarrassment on myself. I have a unique opportunity to own my shadow - both in sobriety and in active addiction. The common thread woven through actions that have hurt myself and others is dishonesty. It doesn't have to be that way. I can be honest about things that make me look "weak" or "uninterested in recovery" or "inconsistent" or even inconsiderate. It was one of the things that I talked about with my parents today - my default tendency to only show sides of myself that I think would be acceptable to that person. Modeling that in the past would have probably meant I would have never dated Clair because she would have known I am an addict. But if I am not compatible with someone for who I am, why do I want to be with them?

I broke down a couple of times with mom and dad today talking about Clair. I hope wherever she is, whatever she is doing that the Lord God is looking out for her Highest Good. I have witnessed her level of honesty and hopefully I have learned from it.

Mem Qs: Walk Away song, Scott graduation, Irritation, Aquanum story, Flyer win.

Goodnight Nicole & family!

Saturday, June 5

Scott left this morning. Fare thee well my friend. I wish you the best. Before he left he gave me the book *The Four Agreements*. It was totally unexpected, and as such, I see a serendipitous spiritual message in it. I read the first chapter and part of the First Agreement tonight. The First Agreement is Be Impeccable with my Word. Or, do not use words against myself. Implied in that is to not use my words against others by representing myself in a knowingly dishonest fashion. That is of utmost importance to me right now and I have been thinking about it a lot today as it relates to my Relapse Recovery Program and how I will speak to Kyle on Monday. I don't want to put anything in there that I am not 100% committed to doing just to please him, Kelly or Keystone. I value their recommendations, but this is my life and the community I build on the outside has to have my imprint. Specifically, the imprint of having a home when strangers can enter there. That is authentically me and I still feel called to do that. In the past with teachers, parents and therapists I would agree to everything to protect what I thought was their image of me. That image is an illusion. To my own self, and to my community be true.

We went to the Speaker Jam/B-ball Tourney today and it was high comedy. The only game we watched was officiated by one of the worst refs I have ever seen. It had me yelling from the stands. By the time we got home and did puccess group I was very tired and still a bit emotionally agitated. I did the smart self-care action of napping and only then doing chores. It made my evening - the last Media AA meeting, Wallace's closure, Golf w/ Nick, Milton's call, etc - so much more enjoyable because I was more fully Present. I love myself.

Goodnight Crozet!

Sunday, June 6

Any lasting change builds on itself slowly. The course of the authentic, honest life is not a sprint, it is a marathon. Pace myself.

It's now 10:15pm and another day is wrapping up. Both the Flyers and Lakers are on TV and we are flipping back and forth in the community room. I have to give myself some credit - I was very aware of speaking my truth today, even when my first inclination was to repress and silence myself. I shared at the SLAA meeting about my past pattern of lying and/or not saying my truth either to avoid conflict or to try and shape that person's image of me. That is why I was not honest when Claire first asked me whether or not Marilyn was my friend from Penguin. That was my first and best chance to tell the truth, have any healthy conflict that might arise from the resulting questioning but keeping my integrity. I did not do that and because of it, I am not talking to Claire. I feel that cost so deeply. Oh, how I wish I could turn back time. But all I can do is live in the Now and NOT MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN. I can be, and will be, impeccable with my word. Let that be the legacy of love that Claire leaves for my life. Lord God, take good care of her better than I did. Help her flourish for the Highest Good. And guide my path as well.

Q's: Speaking up in Paul's class, Brewsters, Nap, Last Bryn Mawr Hospital SLAA, Lakers loss.

Good night Johanna & the Churchills

Monday, June 7

9:15am

Just read the 2nd Agreement in Ruiz's book: Don't take anything personally. What a wonderful agreement to have with myself, yet so hard to do when it entails overwriting years of being programmed TO take everything personally. How could I put that into practice today? Kyle and Paul will talk to me and possibly I will pick up some judgments or disapproval of the choices I am making. I won't take it personally. They have their own dream. Keystone has its own dream. All I can do is listen, ponder and follow my heart.

I could train myself to become aware when I am suddenly taking something personally - "Oh, there it is. I am getting defensive." I want everyone to agree with me but that is unrealistic. Suffering, conflict and disagreement are unavoidable. In fact, they aid my growth. Lean into them.

9pm

I just never know what the day will bring. After meeting with Paul I got pulled in to a meeting with him, Kyle, Kelly and Mary where they pushed me on @ the recovery roommate situation @ the couchsurfing boundaries and @ the Claire boundaries. I am agreeing to a recovery roommate if I have a slip in the first 90 days, no couchsurfing for 90 days and no contacting Claire for 5 months. Ugh. Talk about surrender. It just feels like so much giving up. I need to look at it in a positive light and think about all the fun things I can do. Just no pussy. But listen, I didn't get much pussy on my walk - just Claire and Tuanna and I still had a blast then. I can see my thinking starting to get more needy. I am feeling lonely and unloved. I should go to bed early tonight and no chase the night.

I also had my graduation ceremony today. It was beautiful. Dobber wore a black tie. I talked about Community and Grace, and everyone said really kind, encouraging words. I took a snapshot of it in my mind so that I will never forget!

Goodnight Kennan and Martha!

Tuesday, June 8

My last day at Keystone and it might be a doozy. Paul just told me my phone call with Kelly and Claire is scheduled for high noon. I really don't know what to expect. I guess this is perfect practice for letting go and letting God manifest the greatest good. But I still feel sick to my stomach just a little bit. It has been 32 days since I heard her voice. If she sounds angry and hurt, how will that affect me? I need to resist blaming myself. The past has been played. I have taken responsibility for my actions and I am getting healthier each day. Her emotions today are not my responsibility. I just need to take care of myself and speak honestly.

While I was exercising today I thought about the balance of individual needs versus the needs of the community. My community now is that of recovering men and women all over the country, but most specifically the 15 or 16 who have touched my life here at Keystone. The need of the community - to grow in recovery and develop healthy patterns - might outweigh any impulsive need I feel to act out. We are more important than me. That is a revolutionary thought in this society. I need to think on it some more and maybe talk to Dad. Random thought: What does a cross country walk and walk into recovery have in common? With both you get really used to seeing and walking with your shadow. My shadow is not my enemy, it is part of me. Denying it does no good.

1:16pm

Had the phone call with Claire and it has brought with it a lot of sadness. I cried toward the end when I was talking about my family. Hearing her voice and making those boundaries just made it feel so final. I never wanted to be away from her and now I have to be - for 5 more months at least. All I can do is meditate with her, send her the Light and share my feelings with others. I am so sad. And that is okay. I will not die. Goodnight Fairfield!

Wednesday, June 9

It's my first night back out in the real world and my urges feel 4x as strong as they were in the restricted environment of Keystone. I made a meeting tonight but I didn't share. Right now, at least, I simply feel no willingness to be abstinent from sex and masturbation. All evening I have been struggling with the desire to get a massage and to correspond with former female friends. I am coming face to face with this evident reality (at least for tonight) - with no Claire in my life and no hope of a future with her I don't have much willingness to be completely sober. Sober from paid sexual encounters - chat lines, massages, escorts, yes. But sober from masturbation and consensual sex and phone sex... no. One thing that kicks up for me is a desire to cancel my therapy appointment with Tim. But I am not going to indulge my flight mechanism. I am going to go on there, breathe, and speak my truth, no matter how uncomfortable it makes me feel.

But just for today, I didn't use. And tomorrow I am going to sit in meditation and pray for another 24 hours sober from ALL my bottom lines. I will take the train to NYC. I will go grocery shopping. I will unpack my stuff. I will go to the SRA meeting. I will volunteer at the adult school. I'll call Robert and Doug and the Keystone office and I will set up my Wii. Oh, I will call Alex as well - in the morning when I get home. And I will breathe. I am not going to die if I don't cum tomorrow. It will be day 49.

Mem Qs: Aaron and I living room chat/laughs "Stuzy shares his thoughts"

KOP mail, security guy, Paoli Wed meeting and John R., Alex's email, Flyer loss

Goodnight Yarbroughs!

6/8/10

Dear Claire,

I've never forgotten how Alice Walker wrote the Color Purple as a succession of letters from Celie to God. Like God never read those letters, you will probably never read these. But it helps me to write them nonetheless.

I heard your voice on the phone today for the first time in over a month. I was anxious and apprehensive. I didn't want the call to come off as me establishing boundaries on you, especially since you were the one that were hurt by my dishonesty. I hope you know how sorry I am that you were so embarrassed and betrayed by my lies. I know that at this point sorry doesn't mean anything. I am finally at a place where I love you enough to let you go. I cried the night before I came into treatment rewatching Away From Her, especially the scene at the very end where the husband brings Audrey back to the nursing home so his wife will be happy. The love and pain in his eyes is palpable, but he knows he has to let go. It is so hard to do.

One thing that makes it easier is that I know that God is directing your life for the highest good. All my attempts to be your caretaker, and friend ended up blowing up in your face. You are much better hands with me just sending you the Light each morning and giving you total distance to take control of your own life.

Each morning I chant our tones at 7:30am, knowing that you are sitting in your bed, joined with me spiritually in the only way we can be together. In spirit, we are all one. That's all I ever wanted - to have you and me together for a lifetime. I guess God had other plans. I miss you terribly but accept that for today, I need to stay away.

Thursday, June 10

I boarded the Keystone train at 30th St. Station and am listening to a Paul Simon song - Bernadette - and for the first time in 24 hours I feel light and happy. I've been listening to music for the past 45 minutes and it has lifted my spirits. This is my life and I need to live it as honestly as possible. Each day will bring with it unexpected situations, some suffering, a measure of joy and an opportunity to be impeccable with my word and not take anything personally. That is my expectation of every single day. I simply want to be able to go to bed every night and say I was an honest man who spoke my truth and didn't shy away from situations that might entail healthy conflict or uncomfortable emotions. I meditated and prayed this morning and asked the Light to guide me JUST FOR TODAY as how to best be authentic, creative and honest. I can't ask for anything more than that.

When I see an attractive woman my natural inclination is to objectify her body. That is my reflex reaction so to speak. I accept and acknowledge that part of my shadow. I'm shining Light on it. Now I go a step further. I bring awareness to the thought and say "Oh, okay, She has a nice body and I am objectifying it" and follow that up with "It is okay to let it go and I send her the Light hoping that the Highest Good manifests in her life today."

Goodnight Laura & boys!

Friday, June 11

I faced a boogeyman today and lived to tell the story. It wasn't a physical boogeyman, but a metaphorical one. I kept my appt. with my therapist despite knowing that he was NOT going to "agree" with the decisions I've made. Last night I had an intensely sexual conversation with DeAnne and masturbated while we were talking, although I did not orgasm during the conversation. I listened to her cum three times and stayed up way too late in the process. I woke up around 9 with my mind still obsessed with sexual fantasies. I briefly entertained the thrilling mental option of paying for a massage or buying time on Lavalife before deciding that the more I obsessed about the thought the more I would be tempted to "up the adrenaline ante". So I decided to just lay back and masturbate to fantasy, which didn't take long. After I finished and had my first orgasm in 50 days I showered, had a smoothie and went in to watch the Mexico/South Africa world cup game. I was not struggling with guilt as much as I was battling a desire to avoid my appt with Tim. After the game I made a wonderful Outer Circle decision and did my 20 minutes of meditation. Even though I was dosing off and my mind wasn't particularly present the practice of meditation restored me to a sense of balance. I took a 30 minute nap and got ready to go see Tim. I am very proud of how I spoke my truth to Tim even though I KNEW HE WAS THINKING THAT I AM MAKING THE WRONG DECISION. I simply feel as though I need some time to experience MY reality. No shoulds. Just wants and consequences. I am keeping ALL paid sexual encounters AND masturbation to pornography on my bottom line. But masturbation to fantasy and while talking to consenting friends is going to be middle circle for the next 30 days.

Right now I am feeling lonely. But I won't die. I will breathe and fall asleep. I love myself!! Qs: Starbucks/Bondow w/ Ray, 7pm run, SAA related to person mtg.

Goodnight again Laura & Boys!

Sunday, June 13

I'm in a rut. I'm in what seems like a very deep rut. But nothing is so deep that I can't get out, and as the inscription on King Solomon's ring read, THIS TOO SHALL PASS. I have been experiencing about 24 hours of intense grief over the end of my former relationship with Claire. That, coupled with the awareness of how deeply it hurt her, has led me down a path that is NOT healthy. I bought time on Lavalife. I've spent hours masturbating. I have not gone to any meetings. I didn't meditate today or go for a run. My bed is still unmade. I've existed on a diet of Ricci Knopius and cheese, with some raisins thrown in for good measure (and fiber). Instead I woke up and sat at my computer and finished my iMovie of Claire and I and then I sat on the couch and did jack shit right up until now. I keep hearing this voice in my head - "Time to get a recovery roommate." I will call Mary on Monday or Tuesday and ask for contacts.

The other lingering question is whether I should pursue a job at ABS. Today my gut is telling me no. Fuck the money. I need a new start. I can find another job. I just have to believe in myself!

Goodnight Judy and hotel in Christiansburg.

Thursday, June 17

A four day hiatus from my journaling. This has done quite a number on my PCI. But I'm back today to complete the mind/body/soul triecta of journaling/running/meditating for the first time in probably 5 days.

I am biding my time while my turkey chili (minus the chicken broth) cooks on the stove and while the none-too-harmonic update sound of Jason Sobell's live blog emanates from the computer. Let's catch up on a roller coaster week. Monday and Tuesday I pretty much stayed at home all day and avoided calls from the likes of Robert, Wallace and Carolyn. I did not avoid Lavalife however and ended up meeting Meet at my place on Tuesday evening. She is a cute, petite 23 year old with a Claire type body and a huge, beautiful clit. Methinks, however, that she has had a tough life. She comes from the school of life, and the streets of the Bronx, not from the manicured lawns of Lehigh like Claire and I. We hooked up and it was quite enjoyable. I used protection, which I am very happy about and she gave me one of the best blow jobs I have ever experienced. She hung out for a bit after while the Lakers played before going home.

Yesterday I finally got up the gumption to call Simon and talk shop. He wants me back but we both force a huge HR roadblock. I won't know more until Tuesday so no one's worrying about it until then. Then last night I took the short 20 min walk across the McCombs Dam Bridge to Yankee's Stadium to take in a game with Babak. I had a great time, downed a Michelob and watched 47 year old Jamie Moyer give up only 2 runs in 8 innings. Babak is a solid guy - would like to hang out with him more. Today has been pretty uneventful - watched A Sunday Morning, ran, meditated, cooked and now journaling. Tonight: Game 7 at Rays' homept. Goodnight Whiter, and Jim and Betty Bear!

Saturday, June 19

I skipped a day yesterday and I was in danger of missing another if I didn't sit down right now at 7:17pm and record my thoughts. At Keystone I got in the habit of writing right before I went to bed because I didn't have shit else to do. But now I see myself back in my pattern of staying up late each night and talking to women on the phone. So if I don't journal in the productive portion of the day - from 3-8 - it doesn't get done.

Yesterday Irene came to clean and I did three big loads of laundry. It feels good to have everything washed and put away. Then I ran and meditated and had a really nice talk with this woman named Akai from the Bronx before heading out to the flagfish game on the 54th/West End field. We crapped the bed big time. I only got one hit and severely misjudged a ball I called which was clearly the shortstop's play. On top of that the ump had us playing with 50ft. bases for the first three innings. It was a disaster, but I still had a fun time. Went out with Ray & Jeff after on 72nd St for ciders, apps and girl talk. Ray is loving his new dating

Wednesday, June 23

I've become REALLY bad at journaling lately. But I feel good today and I have a few minutes until Josephine arrives to watch the Ghana game with me. This morning's USA-Algeria game was probably top 5 memorable sporting finish for me with Donovan's goal in the first minute of extra time. Unbelievable.

Saturday will be the USA's next game - maybe I can watch it with mom, dad and Ann. On Friday I have decided to go to Ocean City with them. It has been many years since I've walked the wooden boardwalk planks there. Saltwater taffy, mini golf, T-shirt shops and sand in my bathing suit. Those are my memories of Ocean City. Dad loves the beach with a passion.

I'm taking a day off from masturbating today. It was getting a bit out of control again. I had to be more focused and productive with my time from 9-5. Less calling the line and more doing stuff outside of the house. I'm meeting Akai today, so we will see how that goes. We are meeting for cocktails on the UWS - around 103rd St. So far since I've been back from Keystone I have met up with Moet, Diette, Annie, Sadjo, Nekia, or I am trying to decide if I want to meet up with Tiffany and Lyn. I probably will, if just for coffee. Kenya might come down. And DeAnn might too this summer. I certainly have lots of irons in the fire, I think I can take a break from looking for other irons. Saw G.W.D.T. on Sunday - great movie. Diette and I had a nice walk around the village and dinner @ peep on Saturday. Man she was looking good. She has one crazy body! Okay, off to watch the game.

***No entries Jun 24 – Nov 4**

Fri, Nov 5

Lollie & tea at Bible House, DVR watching, Aphia & Sally texting

Sat, Nov 6

Tkts, Seaport to Time Warner Center walk, Carolla, Auction, Jaselle, Ave Q with Whitney, Italian food, waiting for you to kiss me

Sun, Nov 7

Fall backward, blue sky, talk to Sharda, bagel & coffee, walk to marathon, look for Joey, walk back listening to pandora, emails, Amelie, Luther, Eagles & Raider wins, coffee with Ray, drive back to PA, Adam & Drew pod, Jim Brickman

Mon, Nov 8

Liberty Ridge (LR) office Alpha, tuna casserole, old navy, see Due Date movie with Aaron in Springfield, fall asleep on couch watching MNF

Tues, Nov 9

LR office, pre-Thanksgiving with a chicken at Morins, Marcia texts, Redskins game offer, talk with Aaron & dad re: trying to sell 107 house

Wed, Nov 10

LR, FDC meeting cancelled, Thyberg Lectio Devina, drive Simon & Ben to NYC, lunch buffet at Sapphire, drive home, drop car back off at garage, Patsy's great pizza, bar with Ray & Ben, texting friends and phone sex with Jaselle

Thu, Nov 11

Work early, pics canon Andrew, lunch Danielle Columbus circle, walk to 72, groceries, walk to kitchenette, early, meet Kafia, steak burrito, milkshake, listen to Hodgman, walk her to train

Fri, Nov 12

Work early, pics Doug Lockhart, choir school hand hurt, Board of Trustees ends, leave at 4, Anna & Ben in Bryant park, Times Square, walk to 23rd to meet Whitney, eat BBQ, Gotham comedy, Tony Rock, chilly chill, Matt, Anna, good times, walk back to 72nd, say goodbye at 96

Sat, Nov 13

Leave apt at 11 with Ben. TKTS seaport get Rain (Beatles tribute show) tix, hot, Ground zero, city hall, annoying 6 train, take him to church, wander to Union Square for an hour, carrot bread & hot grape juice, girls ask about shirt, meet Ben again, eat at Eva's near NYU, to the 1 train, I chill at home, Best That Never Was, phone sex with Jaselle, meet Ben for RAIN show, he is really into it, Let It Be, Hey Jude sing a long, great time, back at apt, Ben's pics, Russian beer, 30 Rock

Sun, Nov 14

Leave apt at 11. Coffee & bagel outside City College. Beatles pandora. Walk down to Guggenheim. Classicism and Chaos exhibit with Kafia. She was looking good. Walk after around reservoir. UWS to get food. Eat back in park. Make out with it getting cold and cop car there. Walk back to 96 arm in arm. Home to change. Meet Ben at ABS. 127 Hours movie. Pick up car.

Mon, Nov 15

Leave to drive to Liberty Ridge at 7:30am. Ben sleeps while I listen to Simmons & Buster Olney. Work - not much done. Invite Aaron to MNF. No go, Endel either. Get to Carolyn's at 2. Wawa then the road. Talk about Kafia and Whitney. Traffic near Stadium. Eat at Ruby Tuesdays. Parking and school bus shuttle. Arrive at game at 7:30pm. Right down by field for 20 min. Seats five rows from top. Screaming Redskins fan. Eagles score on first play and first five possessions. Blow out. Rain starts. Hot chocolate halftime. Watch third quarter by concessions. Leave. Walk to shuttle. Sonny J on radio. Drive back, Starbucks, home at 2:30, bed by 3am.

Tue, Nov 16

Work at 10:30. Normal day. Home by 6:15. BBQ pork & Salad. Aaron sleeping. A Few Good Men movie then Bad Santa. Marco Estee Sabrina pics. Text Nikki. Scrolling Backpage.

Wed, Nov 17

Visit Appleford. Work till 7. Drive back. Brent gets in late.

Thu, Nov 18

Bible House. Burritos with Brent. Meet Kafia for coffee near Columbia. Give her Ishmael. Keely & Rosie meet me there.

Fri, Nov 19

Work at Bible House. Lunch with Pascal at Mexican place on 9th Ave. Stayed in and watched DVR.

Sat, Nov 20

Walk with Brent at 10. By Grant's Tomb and then across 95th into the park, up Great Hill, up Lennox to brunch place on ACP near 135th. Brent left. Irish Pub with Ray. Hot chick by 86th St subway. Listen to Anna E. at Postcrypt at Columbia. Chat with Amy. Walk home. Call NE late – talk to Collette.

Sun, Nov 21

Bum around until late. Take a late walk along Columbus to 96th. Groceries at Columbia. Walk home and cook chicken and mustard mashed potatoes for Kafia. Stella Artois. Making out on couch. Decides to stay. Lots of foreplay. She wears my walk green shirt. Both get off.

Mon, Nov 22

Work at Bible House. Meet Maxime & Helena at noon. Lunch Sapphire box. Go home with Belgians. Wait for Brits to get their stuff then out to dinner on 149 & Broadway. Lobster Ravioli. Foot hurting. Limp.

Tue, Nov 23

Work at Bible House. Simon's expense-laden expense sheet. Work until 7. Kafia comes over at 9pm. Italian homework and I read a bit of Jakob vagabonding. Watch Ras Trent, Tosh.O. Fool around in bed. Asleep late.

Wed, Nov 24

Say goodbye to Kafia. Lay on couch. Call phone line. 99th & Park comes over. Very disappointing. Lucy car accident. Nap. Late dinner spaghetti with Belgians. Modern family & Cougar town. Fall asleep on sofa.

Thu, Nov 25

Pick up at 8:15am. Simsbury by 10:30. Watch Miracle with Dad. Meal at 4:45 with full crew. Watch Allison Krause & Zeppelin guy. After dinner watch Maroon 5 guy with Sara Evans on Crossroads. Reading Bryson book about Universe. Downstairs on phone lines. Get off with Kelly from Toronto.

Fri, Nov 26

Toast with honey. Read Bryson. Talk to Den. Walk around pond. Tried to climb tree & fell. Watched Notebook. Talked to Sharda. Dad banished for snoring.

Sat, Nov 27

Left 8:30am. Back in the city. Meet up with Kafia at MOMA at 3. Then walked to Swedish place by Columbus Circle. Bought cider, chocolate at Whole Foods then back home. Watched Eat, Pray, Love. She studied Italian and I fell asleep.

Sun, Nov 28

Go with Kafia to MTA north. Walk down Park, then Madison, coffee and bagel, across Central Park at 79th. To 66th west side then all the way up to Columbus back to my place. Chill and watch football. Called phone line. Sam can over to watch me.

Mon, Nov 29

Worked from home. Afternoon nap. Picked up car at around 8:45pm

Tue, Nov 30

Drove to Liberty Ridge, arriving 9:30am. Went to long lunch while Masterworks presentation was going on. Dropped off racket at Sports Authority. Picked up cheesesteaks on way back to Radwyn. Pearlie and Ann there. They went to the movies. Aaron came home and we ate cheesesteaks, watched TV (Tosh.0)

Wed, Dec 1

It was raining hard. Lunch with Carolyn downstairs. Went out to deposit Rent check at Citibank and call the line. Met Endel after work at Fox and Hizz-ound. Played some pool. He invited me to Turks – dates didn't work. Weird texts from Kafia. Talked to her briefly. Went back to his crib. Watched Bourne Supremacy and drank ciders. To bed pretty early as always. Talked to Mary Lou.

Thu, Dec 2

Didn't have much work to do. Took a long late lunch and got massage at Radisson Valley Forge. Left work at 4:30pm and picked up racket. Dinner at Radwyn (Turkey sandwiches with stuffing and soup). Couldn't eat it all. Watched Cavs game and then Eagles first half with Aaron. Talked about old NFL players, white cornerbacks, google images of cards. Left house at 10pm. Got back home right around 12pm. Traffic on GW upper level. Talking to Claude, better conversation than some. Went to bed late after talking to Whitney on the phone.

Fri, Dec 3

Met Kevin and Emma outside right before I had to move Ray's car at 9am. Returned his car and went to the grocery store to buy milk, bananas and apples. Talked to Kev and Emma for a while. They were so tired. They took a nap and I did some emails, work, etc. Talked to Simon from India. Didn't do much work in the afternoon. Took my usual couch nap. Went to gym around 7:30pm to initiate my 30 day membership. Circuit training, some abs, and the elliptical. Back home. Watched some Marie Luv on S&S.

Sat, Dec 4

Woke up and texted a bit from bed with Aphia, etc. Read a bit of Power of Myth. Kev and Emma were gone. Tiffany from line came over and we got off together. (Preg., Wand). Nice and relaxing. Met Kafia at 7pm at Grand Central. Went to Union Square, ate at Republic, walked to East Village, had coffee and dessert and we had the talk about my history of unfaithfulness, the frustration that I haven't been able to change behaviors even though I am further along with awareness and honesty about it. Tough talk. Probably should have done it two weeks ago. Live and learn. She was very nice about it. But I don't think she can be friends. It was cold out. We walked back to Grand Central. Her train wasn't until 11:45. Waited a little bit with her and then left. Trains running so slow. Didn't get back home until almost midnight. Talked to Claude. Texted with Whitney. Read Power of Myth. Fell asleep. Listen to TAL Toxie podcast.

Sun, Dec 5

Woke up early. Texted with Whitney about her family, inability to sleep. Read some more. Went to gym just after 10. Bike, Treadmill, Leg Circuit, Abs. Walked to my coffee and bagel spot. Really cold. Got back and took shower, wrote list for groceries (ABS Diet) and things need to buy today. Went out to W. 4th street. Bought some toys. Then walked along 14th to Union Square Market. Saw Dancing Shiva and thought about buying it for Claire. Met up with Ray for a drink. Trader Joe's shopping. Picked up Ray's car and drove stuff home.

Mon, Dec 6th

Leave house at 8:45am to drive to DC. Carolla podcast with Sal and Jeff Ross. This American Life podcast about people who don't give up (dude who started his own late night talk show). Eating Mediterranean salad in car. Get to Wolver Hill and pick up bags. To Mexican place near Dulles for lunch. Pick up Simon and Lucy. FREEZING OUT. Drive back to Phoenixville, get back just after 6pm. Couple of glasses of wine. Cauliflower Cheese. Ice Cream and Caramel sauce. Work in Simon's office. To bed at good hour.

Tues, Dec 7

Leave for NYC at 8am. Work at Bible Houe. Return Ray's car. Took one train down to Penn Station. Stood in line for Simmons book signing. Told him his podcast helped get me through my walk. He said it is amazing how many people listen. Met Ray and Carolyn and Jon at the bookstore. Walked over to City Market. I had the pork loin over mashed potatoes and asparagus. Home with Carolyn and Jon. To bed early. Helped get Claude off over the phone.

Wed, Dec 8

Worked at Bible House. Christmas party from 12:30 - 2:30. Point of Grace sang. Left at 4:45. Went to the toy shop on Amsterdam. Back home. Went to the gym until 8pm. Came home, prepared, took a shower, talked to Ray for a while before Whitney arrived. Hot session with Whitney. Three sets. A lot of fun. Went to bed and slept well.

Thu, Dec 9

Worked at Bible House. Not much happened. Stopped at Whole Foods after work and picked up salmon and asparagus. Cooked recipe from my Garth cookbook thinking Sasha was coming over. She wasn't. So I ate and enjoyed watching Community and 30 Rock. Prepared Aphia's surprise gift. Tired. Talked to Claude for a little bit. Feel asleep on sofa.

Fri, Dec 10

Worked at Bible House. Simmons final 30 for 30 pod. Opened Simon and Lucy's gift - a Williams Sonoma Toaster. Met Gene Wood. Got CS request from girl from LA. Left at 5pm. Mailed Aphia's gift. Came home. Ate left over from Salmon meal. Watched The Office one-hour Christmas special.

Sat, Dec 11

Lay around the house all day. Called Lava for a bit. Napped. Diette picked me up at 6:15pm. Scooped up Ray and drove to bowling alley in Brooklyn. Had dinner with Ketan, Bethany, Pierson, Ray and Diette. Fried Chicken. Then drinks at the bar. Band setting up. Finally got lane. Bowled two games. 121 and 118 I think. Ray won first and I won second. Weird pins that hang. Electronica music. Ray drinking. Dancing with girl in lobby. Drive back to NYC. Talking with Pierson about his girlfriend situation. Drop Ray at Hustler Club. Home with Diette. Took a while to find parking. Have sex for like an hour and a half.

Sun, Dec 12

Wake up around 9:30. Diette leaves at 11. Protein shake. Lay around the living room. Watch Pony Excess. Fall asleep. Watch some football. Cook linguine and ground turkey. It's raining out. Decide not to go to Ray's. Watch Cowboy Eagles game at home. Gulls win. Talk to Cheryl and get off before going to sleep.

Mon, Dec 13

Work at Bible House. SDC Comm meeting. Simon's flight delayed, gets in at 1:30pm. Go pick up car and drive home. Park on Amsterdam. Pack up computer and drive back to Bryn Mawr. Watch 2 Mad Men with Aaron.

Tue, Dec 14

Work at Liberty Ridge. Cookies and Hot Chocolate at 2, talk with Frankie, Rob, Carolyn and Holly. Go to Boston Market in West Chester on way to Morins. Have dinner with Carolyn, Jon and Morins. Find out Carolyn is pregnant. Talk about ad in Times Square. Go home and watch two Mad Men. Fall asleep on third one.

Wed, Dec 15

Liberty Ridge office. Execs meeting. Home for dinner and then Mad Men. Up late.

Thu, Dec 16

Day off. Work on Mom's Christmas Letter. Take Aaron to work. Go to King of Prussia. Buy gifts for Dzodzormes. Home and talk on line. Aaron and Mom return. Watch two Mad Men. Then dinner with Mom and Dad while Aaron goes to the gym. Watch two more Mad Men, then short break and watch Season Finale Tomorrow Land at 10:30pm. Stay up after that on my laptop, Aaron in kitchen. Listening to music posted by Mash Vasquez. Aaron tells me about Claudia and her possible romance with a co-worker.

Fri, Dec 17

Go to Great Harvest and pick up Cinnamon Swirl. Liberty Ridge Christmas breakfast. Not that hungry. White Elephant exchange. I'm number 20. Steal illumin-naughty lamp. Then snuggly. Then pick wine. Get that stolen. Get Mark's Liverpool Chinese calendar. Perfect. Stay at work later than I planned. Leave at 4pm. Get back to NYC at around 7pm. Ray needs a diversion so meet up with him at Patsy's after returning car. Talk about his dad and melanoma recurrence. Home and up late with computer in my room. Talk to Whitney about next Fantasy. Then talk to Sharda and get off.

Sat, Dec 18

Sleep in. Lounging around in bed. Texting, writing emails online and on AR. Fall asleep again in afternoon after having Thai in a box from TJ's. Rouse myself around 6. Leave at 7 and go to Time Warner. Chicken dinner from Whole Foods. Meet up with Claude at 8:15. She's nice but an odd bird. Have coffee on Columbus Circle and go back to my apartment. Watch Debt program then Tosh.0 and then a bit of HIMYM before going into my room, watching porn and get off together. She hangs around. Can tell she wants to sleep here. I want no part of it. Watch a bit of SNL and then she leaves at 12:30. Stay up a bit later on computer but then fall asleep.

Sun, Dec 19

Get out of bed around 10:30. Shower and then out to coffee and bagel at 11am. Walk around Broadway. Get light bulbs and heater at El Mundo. Back to apartment and change light bulbs, etc. Wait for Couchsurfer Crystal to arrive. Watching Eagles Giants game. Go to Penn Station and eat at Moe's Southwestern Grill. Take Amtrak train home and Dad picks me up.

Mon, Dec 20

Leave early to pick up coffee and donuts. Spend day at Appleford taking notes on Bicentennial Meeting. Lunch (crab cake) at Tango. See Pat Croce. Get home and do some work on notes. Boring Vikes Bears game outside in Minnesota.

Tue, Dec 21

Septa to Paoli and Carolyn and Jon pick me up. Busy day at work because it is both Simon and my last before break. Leave at around 6:30pm for Newark. Drop Simon and Lucy off and come into NYC. Crystal is home but goes to bed early. Danielle was set to come over but she transferred to the D downtown instead of uptown and wasted her night. I was just as happy to chill here by myself. Talked to Mo for a while.

Wed, Dec 22

Woke up around 9am. Did some work on email and my Concur expenses. Around noon got online and ended up going to Bronx to meet Selena in Baychester for some MM. Cool chick and we had fun. Took forever with traffic to get back. Cooked skirt steak and veggies and then took the 1 train to 66th street. Bought Toby Young book at Borders and then met Jenn to watch The Fighter at Lincoln Cinemas. Good picture. Very good. Met up with Ray afterwards and the three of us had dinner at Five Napkins. Nice seeing Jenn. Decided to hang out together on New Year's Eve and maybe see a show.

Thu, Dec 23

Drove to Bryn Mawr and got there around 1:30pm. Caught the 5pm True Grit showing with Aaron at KOP movie theaters. Came home right after. Got a slice of pizza in Bryn Mawr

Fri, Dec 24

Went to KOP mall but didn't buy anything. Drove to HR Greggs but didn't buy anything. Drove to Ardmore, parked at 107. Aaron was raking leaves. Walked over to Suburban Square and took out 1500 cash and bought stationery and marker pen. Went home and had lunch and made a couple of cards. Had nice sausage spinach soup. Mom and Dad went to Christmas Eve service. Aaron and I stayed at home and watched TV. Phoenixville hoops game against Upper Perk on Local Access.

Sat, Dec 25 - CHRISTMAS

Had French Toast breakfast with Mom and Dad. Worked on some cards. Took a walk to TLA with Dad and got Mugabe Film. Snacked. Watched end of Celts-Magic game. Went to Julie's at 6pm. Had cheese and conversation in living room.

Dinner took forever to start because Julie was unfocused. Highlight dishes - Don's stuffing. Mom's green beans. So stuffed. Apple Pie for dessert. Back to Living Room to chat as Julie got gifts together. Got caramels and treats from Don & family. Got popcorn and \$200 from Julie. Left at around 11pm. Watching the storm report of blizzard coming in. Decided I needed to leave earlier back to NYC and agreed to take Babak with me.

Sun, Dec 26

Woke up early and still not snowing. Text Babak and decided to leave at 8:30am. Left cards for Mom, Dad and Aaron. Drive was a breeze into Brooklyn. Dropped Babak off at 10:20am. When I got into Manhattan it started flurrying. Got a good parking spot on 146th. Crystal still here. Needed to stay another night. Hung out in my room, chatting on the phone. Didn't watch much football. Storm turned into a blizzard. Kadi came over at 5:15pm and we watched Lord of the Rings: Two Towers and then ordered Chinese which I picked up near 148th in the blizzard. Beautiful running down the middle of the streets with nobody out. Watched Undercover boss, cuddled on the sofa. I enjoy being close to her - such a unique energy. No car services working and she had to go home. So we set out in the height of the blizzard and took subway to 125th and then walked all the way over to Lexington in the blowing snow. Kind of fun. Walk back by myself not as fun and wind in face. Got home around 10:30pm. Nice long conversation on the phone with Regina from Atlanta about faith, sexuality, companionship. Text with Whitney for a bit and then fell asleep.

Mon, Dec 27

Huge snow ends. Crystal leaves early in the morning. I go out around 12 and shovel out my car listening to Fresh Air podcast about best movies and music of 2010. Come back in and relax. Text Whitney and set up meeting her out in Chelsea. Go down to Chelsea to see I Love You Phillip Morris. Afterward buy gift certificates for Whitney's card at Duane Reade. Eat at Thai Restaurant with her. Then go to Bar Veloce and have wine and talk. Good time. Take the one train back together.

Tue, Dec 28

Watch Joan Rivers doc on Netflix. Crystal stops over with crazy Elaina from CS. I head out for the first time late in the afternoon and shop at Pathmark and then go to Duane Reade. Trim down there with my new clippers. Watch The Prophet on Netflix. Timika comes over later than I expected, arriving around 10pm. Make Pasta and watch end of Kennedy Center Honors with song tributes to Merle Haggard and Paul McCartney. Then watch Crossroads on the couch with her. Start hooking up and go into the room. Fun time although she is a little thicker than I like. But she squirted all over me when she came. That was great. Fall asleep in the same bed. But her snoring takes me out to the couch mid night.

Wed, Dec 29

Wake up with Timika. She leaves around 11:30am. Go down to UWS around 2:30 and meet Jenn at Starbucks at 64th street. Go to see Blue Valentine. Really enjoyed it, especially the ukelele scene and the "courtship" parts. Really charming and true to life. Walk with Jenn for a while afterward. Dinner at Alice's tea cup - bomb ass pumpkin scones and a salad. Walk more all the way up to 110th street. See new cleaned out apartment. Go back home around 9pm. Talk on the phone - to Regina and then on the line. Go to bed very, very, very late.

Thu, Dec 30

Wake up late. Stay in the house napping and watching TV most of the day until 5:30. Shower and go out to meet with Kelly. Get to Grand Central and she has gone to Penn Station instead. Finally meet up around 7:40pm. Go to Lea Lounge and have a couple glasses of wine and share a sushi platter. She is really, really sexy. Has had a tough life but has survived even though I can notice the emotional scars. We walk to Bryant Park and have coffee and chocolate cupcakes near the ice-skating rink. We start to be affectionate. Then walk down 42nd Street to the movie theater and get tix for Harry Potter. I talk to Aaron to say goodbye while she buys popcorn. In the movie we kiss for first time and are very affectionate. I like her energy and her kisses. After movie I wait for the 2 train with her then walk over to the A train and take it home. Get back right around 3am.

Fri, Dec 31

Lazed around the apartment in the morning. Decided to get going around 4pm and walked down Amsterdam listening to LIMITS podcast by Radio Lab. Ran into Kadi on Amsterdam near 135th Street and walked her over to St. Nicholas Park on

way to Lennox. Continued to Citibank to deposit check but it had just closed. Walked up to about 120th then over to Broadway and then all the way back to my apartment. Stopped into grocery store first to buy yams. Made steak and yams for a late dinner. Ended up watching the Mark Twain Award presentation to Tina Fey with Carrell, Hamm, Myers, Lorne, Armisen, et al while the New Year came. Talked on the line a bit. Annoying as usual. Got off talking to woman near 142nd Street.